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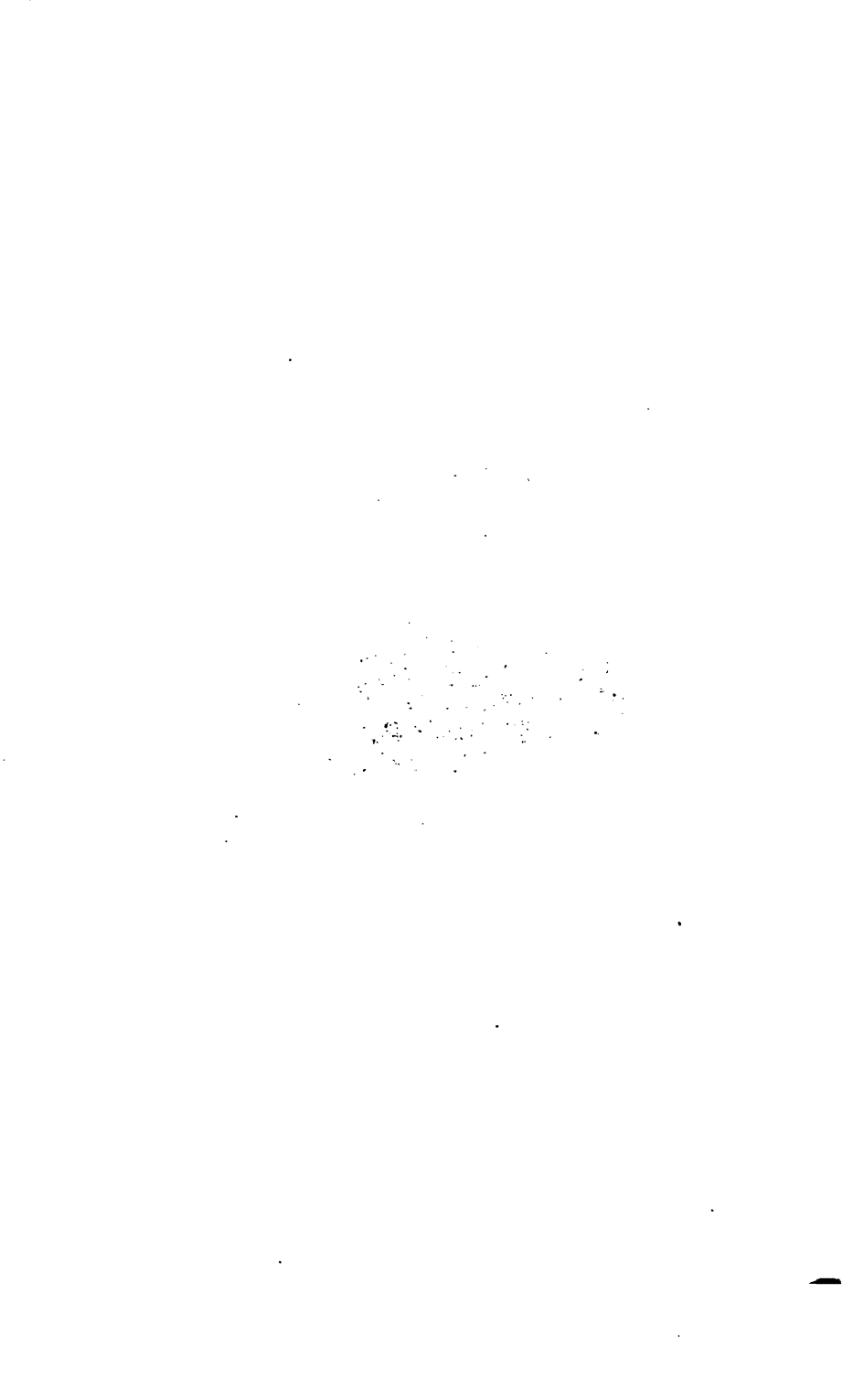
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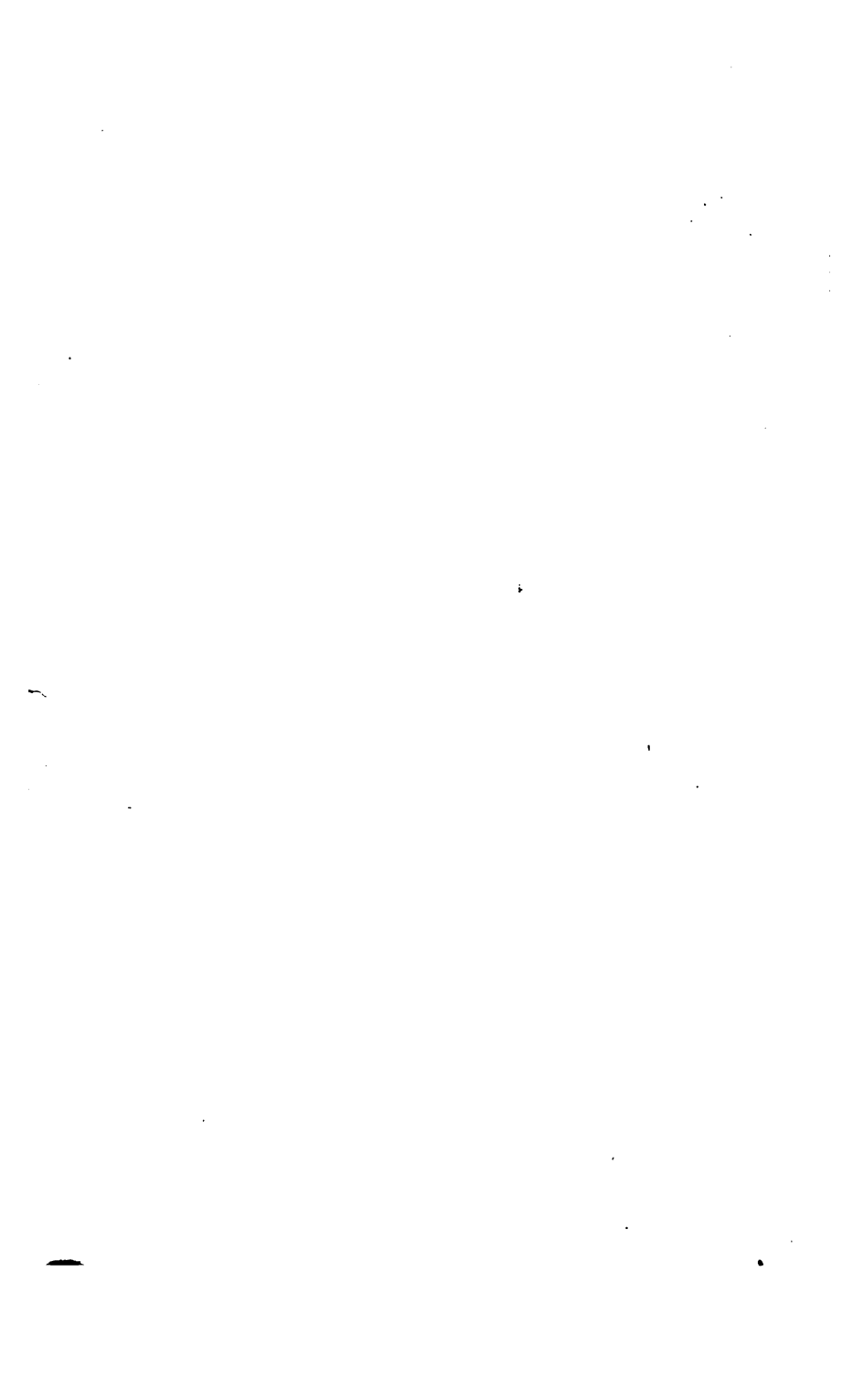
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AN ESSAY
ON
IMITATION
IN
THE FINE ARTS.



32836

AN ESSAY
ON
THE NATURE, THE END, AND THE MEANS
OF
IMITATION
IN
THE FINE ARTS.

John Gibson
Bon

Antoine Chéreau
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF
M. QUATREMÈRE DE QUINCY.

BY J. C. KENT.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., CORNHILL,
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1837.

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70
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LONDON:
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OLD BAILEY.

TO

JOHN SIMPSON, ESQ., LL.D.,

AS A GUIDE IN YOUTH,

A FRIEND IN MANHOOD, AND AN EXAMPLE ALWAYS,

THIS VOLUME

IS GRATEFULLY AND RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE TRANSLATOR.



TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE Translator of the work now presented in an English version, being himself convinced of its great and uncommon excellence, is naturally anxious to obtain for it that attention to which, in his opinion, it possesses so valid a claim. ~

A want, acknowledged by every one, is here supplied. An all-comprehensive and universal Theory, is now, for the first time, unfolded, as a sure guide and instructor where to find the secrets of, and how best to wield, the spells of Art in moulding its creations; and a standard of true taste and right criticism is set up, to try those creations, and to unlock whatever Art has, in its works, of most noble, pure, and elevating.

The original of this small volume, the result of years of thought, was published at Paris in the

year 1823, but appears to have hitherto remained almost unknown on this side the Channel. The chief obstacle removed, it is to be hoped that such will be the case no longer. The author, M. Quatremère de Quincy, has long enjoyed on the Continent a well earned reputation;—the consequence of the talents he has displayed as an Architect and Sculptor, and of the value of the numerous works he has from time to time laid before the public, which all bear ample testimony to his critical acumen, learning, and literary attainments. A Member of the Institute of Paris, he holds also the office of Perpetual Secretary to the Academy of the Fine Arts, which, while it has conferred honour on himself, has been attended by reciprocal credit and advantage to that Society.

It was at one time in contemplation to have pre-faced this translation, first, by an account of what had been already done towards the elucidation of the theory of the Fine Arts.* And small indeed,

* When, throughout the following pages, the Fine Arts are spoken of, they must be understood, not with the limitation usually adopted in England, but as comprehending all the *Arts of Imitation*: viz., Poetry and the Drama, Music, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Gesture, or the art of Dancing and Pantomime.

except as regards quantity, have been the additions to what Aristotle has bequeathed us in the three brief chapters at the commencement of his Poetic; of which, indeed, the present work is an extended and lucid exposition. For the rest, which concerns only Poetry, excepting a few generalities that M. de Quincy has not failed to notice, Aristotle commences where M. de Quincy leaves off. Secondly, to have applied the canons here laid down to the present state of the Arts in Britain. Thirdly, to have given instances in further illustration of some of the points discussed. And, finally, to have pointed out how, by the application of Means founded on the true principle of Imitation, Landscape Gardening, which, by forming as it would seem a wrong notion of that in which its true merit consists, M. de Quincy rejects from the circle of the Fine Arts, may be brought to take rank among them as an Art of Imitation; producing the "resemblance of a thing in some *other* thing which becomes the *image* of it." Without, however, overlooking the circumstance that as the distance that separates the elements of the model from those of the image is small, so the degree of pleasure, (i. e. pleasure

of imitation,) and yet more, its kind, must still retain it on the outer confines of Art.*

This intention, however, from causes needless to state here, has been abandoned, and it may be as well that it is so, since this preamble must have run to a length that would perhaps have seemed to overload the original, which is certainly well able of itself to stand alone, without the necessity for adventitious aid to recommend it to general attention.

The task of translation (always a thankless one)

* I do not impugn the force of the illustration which M. de Quincy has made choice of (see the close of Chapter xvi. Part I.) to show how necessary to the effect of every Art, is the recognition of that Art, and that "the pleasure is greater, the more widely the elements of the model are separated from those of its image;" seeing that he himself has defined the merit of the irregular style of Landscape Gardening to consist in its *not raising a suspicion of Art*. But I cannot admit that Landscape Gardening does, or ought to, aim at any such result. On the contrary, the elements of composition at its command, which are *other* than what nature has anywhere associated in one and the same scene, such as trees and shrubs from *all* and *opposite* climates, well kept walks, smooth turf, &c., setting aside the assistance of Architecture and Sculpture, must be so employed as to allow of the presence of Art being at once recognized.

But as I am precluded from entering further upon the topic in this place, I must content myself with referring those who feel an interest in it, to an article in vol. x. p. 558, of Loudon's Gardener's Magazine.—*Translator*.

was originally undertaken solely at the request of a friend, and he who performed it has therefore no right to look elsewhere for his reward ; while, since the prospect of pecuniary gain has never presented itself, all disappointment on that score is prevented. His only source of anxiety is lest continued ill health and the distractions of business should have prevented him from fulfilling the office devolved on him, in a befitting manner, and doing justice to this essay by clothing it in a dress worthy its high merits. Be this as it may, he feels proud of having been the channel through which it reaches the British Public, and sincerely hopes that his own imperfections may prove no bar to its success. It is without a wish to curry indulgence for himself, that he would fain intreat those who hold the keys of popular favour to exercise the power they are invested with towards the promotion of that success.

LEVANT LODGE,
Oct. 1836.



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INTRODUCTION.

IMITATION is of so extensive and so varied an import, when its relations and effects in all that falls within the scope of the faculty of imitating are considered, a faculty which is one of the distinctive characteristics of man, that ever to have a complete and exhaustive treatise on the subject may well be despaired of.

Imitation would almost of itself afford means for a full exposition of man, both in his natural and social condition. Indeed, what is there, whether in his habits, his tastes, or his works, that does not admit of reference to the imitative instinct? To enter into an investigation of the theory of imitation in its fullest extent, would be to submit every action of human life, every object that enters into the relations of social existence, to an analysis without end.

By restricting the idea of imitation, as is an-

nounced in the title of this essay, within the circle of the fine arts, so called, it will have been already seen that I am far from having projected one of those theories which, pretending to be universal, far exceed the abilities of their authors and the comprehension of their readers.

Some metaphysicians,* with a view to embrace the whole theory of imitation in the fine arts, have endeavoured to refer every idea concerning it to one general principle, but one so elevated, placed in a region so little accessible to the generality of persons, that those even who think they have attained to it, seize, as it were, but a point of concentration, where the whole absorbs its several parts.

Others,† crawling as theorists along the multifarious paths of analysis, have flattered themselves that they have been enabled to trace out, step by step, the whole of a general doctrine, in every way applicable to each of the fine arts; but in aiming at the universal, they have been wanting in unity; they have had too many parts to join together to admit of forming from them one body, and from the incoherency of their production have been unsuccessful in achieving a whole.

If, in restricting a general theory of imitation to the fine arts, it were proposed to embrace the

* Kant. Kritik der Urtheilskraft.

† Sülzer. Theorie des Beaux Arts.

whole of each one, or the ideas relative to each of its parts, the design nevertheless would be still vast, and the task to be prosecuted scarcely find a limit. In fact, each of the fine arts presents itself to our view, within its own particular and distinct province, well nigh as one of those confederate states, which with others forms one whole and the same empire, but which, though submitting to the general laws of a central government, has no less its customs, its privileges, its laws of exception, and its especial character impressed upon it by nature. Consider then, how many studies, and how great an extent of knowledge must needs be united to constitute a proper qualification to treat thoroughly the particular theory of all the fine arts, since so much labour is requisite to work out that of one only.

The entire theory of one art alone is not so very simple a matter.

At the very outset of an undertaking similar to the present, it is immediately perceived that, instead of one theory only, many, and among these very different ones, must necessarily be included. Every art produces by its works different impressions, and very distinct effects, from which arise forms of composition corresponding, either to the peculiar aspects of the model, or to the organs or faculties of the body or mind with which they are held to be in relation. For instance, according to the diversity of forms of composition in its

works, an art addresses itself to the reason, the imagination, the feelings, the taste, or the physical organ. There will be then the theory of the reason or judgment, the theory of the imagination, that of the feelings and the expression of the passions, that of taste or of fitness, and that of the practical execution or skill.

What I have said above explains far better than I could otherwise render it intelligible, how foreign it is to my wishes to comprise, under the general expression of *imitation*, ideas and researches so extensive.

My design is not to consider the different arts, as modes of imitation, in the variety of the resources peculiar to all and each, of the studies they require, of the rules that observation and experience have assigned to them, of the methods which are proper to them, of the reasons which advance or retard perfection, of the causes of their impressions, &c., &c.

Far from having proposed to myself to tread such a multiplicity of paths, which may be compared to radii terminating at the circumference of a complete theory, I am contented, in the first part, or that which has for its object *the nature of imitation*, to place myself, as it were, in a kind of centre, which I look upon as the starting point of all the paths. It seems to me that certain altogether primary, and central, ideas upon what constitutes the elementary principle of that imitation

which is proper to the fine arts, have never been collected together, and reconciled under one single point of view, in such manner as to determine all the uncertainties of opinion, and give to it an invariable rule.

After having considered the nature of imitation, it cannot but be inquired what ought to be its true end. Here again incomplete ideas, the results of views too confined, have been the means of establishing doctrines which fall far short of their object. I have thought it incumbent on me to direct them to a more exalted end, which, without being exclusive, without prohibiting the power to desist at an inferior stage, might indicate to genius the goal which it should be its ambition to arrive at. Such is the subject of the second part of this work.

The end once established, there will remain for the theory to point out the way which conducts to it.

The third part is devoted to the development of *the means of imitation*. But what is so called, according to the system of this work, has nothing but the name in common with the practical, technical, or didactic means appertaining to each art. The means to be discussed are those which arise from the very nature of imitation, and are closely related to the nature of its end, those which depend on the action of the judgment and understanding, and which are directed by taste in accor-

dance with the genius proper to each kind of imitation. Nothing relative to execution, such as it is understood in ordinary language, is introduced in treating on the theory of these specific means. In short, be it understood, that the question to be discussed is the *means of imitation*, and not those of the *imitator*.

I do not conceal from myself how much a work on a theory more or less abstract, relating to the fine arts, may have to dread from many of its readers. On a subject of this kind, some would wish to find definite ideas that the mind may easily refer to things of common experience. Others, thinking that in discoursing of the fine arts an ornate style ought only to be employed, require of the author brilliant sketches which may lay hold on the imagination, high sounding passages, and graphic descriptions, pleasing to the ear and the senses, but which leave no permanent idea in the mind. But what was to be done? Every one in treating on a subject selects some particular point of view. To this he ought to adhere, and in consequence must expect that his views will not accord with the opinions or inclinations of all. Every subject, be it what it may, has its own peculiar judges, and it is their suffrages that one ought to be ambitious to obtain; their actual number being a matter of trifling importance.

I foresee, moreover, an objection that will be

urged. It will be asked what good end such a theory will serve, and whether it can avail towards the production of better works. To this I would reply, — “ I think that the beautiful works of art have rather given birth to theories, than theories to beautiful works. But there exist also theories which are, in their kind, beautiful works, and from which many derive pleasure. Thus it were not more fitting to ask of what use is the art of poetry, than of what use is a poem.”



PART I.

OF THE NATURE OF IMITATION IN THE FINE ARTS.

Non res sed similitudines rerum.

CICERO, *De Nat. Deor.*, L. 1. § 27.

CHAPTER I.

DEFINITION OF THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLE OF IMITATION IN THE FINE ARTS.

AFTER having restricted the theory of imitation, as will have been seen in the Introduction, to what, by common agreement, are termed the fine arts, I here propose to contract still further the circle of ideas which form the subject of this First Part. Far from ranging the circumference, as varied as extensive, of the imitative region of the works of genius, whose effects are every where felt, it is in the very centre of the principle on which that imitation which is proper to the fine arts is constituted, that I purpose to confine myself.

I have then no intention, in treating on *the nature of imitation*, to scrutinize its secret relations, by an analysis of the different kinds of impressions produced by its works, nor, in short, to lay down all that would be requisite to render the subject complete. I wish only to investigate and point out ✓ what *imitation in the fine arts* ought to be, in order to constitute *imitation*.

Thus it is its elementary principle, its intrinsic character, in other words, its essence which I design to discover and unfold.

The imitative faculty is truly characteristic of man ; it is concerned in all his acts, it enters into all his works ; among all creatures it belongs to him, and to him alone, in such wise that he may be defined by this property, in naming him the *imitative animal*. Hence, the numberless different significations in which the word *imitation* is employed ; hence, the variety of imitative effects which are continually produced in all the works of human industry ; and hence, consequently, the necessity of isolating the theory of *imitation in the fine arts*, and submitting it to an especial investigation.

In order to define it, it is necessary to disengage the idea or notion of it, from those which characterize the imitation proper to the other arts. The habit of confounding properties inherent in two distinct operations of the imitative faculty is the cause of all the mistakes, which, from the manner

of speaking, are transferred to the manner of seeing and feeling, and which, after having warped the judgment of those to whom the fine arts are addressed, finish by deceiving the judgment, and vitiating the taste of those who produce them.

To separate by a clear, elementary, and, by its very simplicity, incontestible distinction, the principle of the imitation proper to the fine arts, from that of the other kinds of imitation, is not to devote oneself to an unprofitable analysis; it will be seen, on the contrary, that it will be to lay open, in aid of theory, a fruitful source of advantage, if it is true that from its consequences may be derived the laws of taste by which the fine arts should be regulated.

I reduce this fundamental principle to its most simple expression in the following terms: To

imitate in the fine arts, is to produce the resemblance of a thing, but in some other thing which becomes the image of it. *The imitations must be*

By this definition may be at once distinguished the essential difference that exists between the imitation which is proper to the fine arts, and the other kinds of imitation.

To produce certain resemblances belongs, without doubt, to every kind of imitation. But even though all imitation produces resemblances, all resemblance is not therefore necessarily a result of imitation; which is self-evident, as, for instance, in the works of nature in which are found the

greatest number of resemblances, and those the most striking. It is sufficient to name any one of those numerous objects which she is perpetually reproducing. The word reproduce expresses that power which she possesses of bringing forth a countless number of organised bodies, which, succeeding each other in the same forms and with the same properties, must in consequence frequently present a very great similarity. Every one is aware that in all this there is no imitation. [It is not nature that imitates; it is she that is imitated]

Nearly the same thing holds good, of the resemblances which exist among what are called the works of human industry. Man also brings forth objects, which, by reproducing, he multiplies in order to supply the wants of society. But these objects resemble each other without, on that account, begetting in us either impressions or pleasure such as arise from the resemblances, which the imitation of the fine arts produces.

It may truly be affirmed that the idea of the similarity which exists between one ear of corn and another, between one fruit and another on the same tree, in no wise affects us. In like manner no agreeable emotion arises within us at the innumerable resemblances which may be found among the manufactured productions of human industry. Every one will say that such would assuredly be the case, because, in the first instance, that of natural productions, the resemblance is the result

of organic power, and, in the second, of a mechanical operation.

— Undoubtedly: but that is not sufficient.

Why does not this sort of organic or mechanical repetition equally give rise in us to the idea of resemblance or imitation, and, above all, to the pleasurable emotion which is attached to that idea?

The reason is, simply because that which constitutes the primary condition of imitation is wanting; namely, the image.

I admit that those who are acquainted with the nature of this process of repeating the object, viewing it only in the light of a mechanical result, refuse to assign the least value to a conformity which has no merit in their eyes. But this judgment is in them the consequence of their knowledge. Now, in a like case, I find that the same judgment is arrived at through the feelings or instinct of those even who are ignorant of the mechanical secret of the conformity.

The object, being thus rendered conformable to its model, does, in fact, announce to all what it is, and, yet better, what it is not. Now, what it is, is this; morally speaking, it is the same as its model, though, physically, it may be some other. And it is yet more easily seen what it is not; it is not the image of its model, but only the repetition of it.

Thus then we see why the kind of imitation

which ought rightly to be termed repetition, yields no pleasure (of the same nature with those which belong to the imitation of the fine arts). In truth, the pleasure which is produced by works of imitation proceeds from the act of comparing. It is certain that the eye and the mind, whose operation is here the same, are required to judge, and, in order to judge, they must compare, deriving enjoyment only from this twofold condition. If the pleasure arises from the judgment itself, which is formed between the object to be imitated, and that by which it is imitated; if the mind enjoys so much the more, as will be seen hereafter (Chap. xv.), as there is more to compare and more to judge, it is then obvious that, in imitation by means of identical repetition, there is absolutely nothing to enjoy, since nothing apprizes us that there is aught to judge, or to compare.

Such is the essentially negative and inconsequential effect, as far as the faculty which compares and that which judges is concerned, of all resemblance termed identical, of every mode of reproducing one object by another, which cannot be accounted an image of it, since it is confounded with it.

Thus, suppose two vases of the same size be placed one on each of two tables made in like manner to match, no one will be struck with the resemblance of the two vases, nor with the con-

formity of the two tables ; but let a painter reproduce upon his canvass one of these tables surmounted by its vase, and there will result from this kind of resemblance a new power which will arrest the eye ; for the attention is apprized, by the proof the representation on the canvass affords of it, that the image of an object is concerned.

If it be now supposed that the representation of the same object takes place by an optical illusion, or that the picture is so disposed as to conceal that it is a work of painting, it will be found, that, the idea of an image being no longer presented to the spectator, the effect of the imitation with respect to it will be nullified. — Nothing appealing to him for judgment, he has nothing to compare, and therefore experiences no pleasure ; for the principle of the pleasure is in the reference, which in this case he has been unable to make, of the image to its model.

Now no such reference can be made, except between two objects, not only different, but distinct, that is to say which of themselves apprise us that they are different.

As regards imitation, I call all those objects identical, which do not present themselves to us as different ; it being understood that it is not here meant to take the words *identity* and *difference* in their absolute and mathematical acceptance : I will just remark here, that according to

the rigid sense of the word, there is but one sole identity in nature. This well established fact will become one of the fundamental supports of the theory of imitation in the fine arts, by aiding to prove what kind of resemblance is proper to their works. Those objects then are called identical, which simply appear to be so, as are all the works produced by mechanical operations. This kind of apparent identity, which is the cause of confusion between similar objects, is precisely that at which the imitation of the fine arts ought not to aim. Such resemblance ought not to be its end. Repetition by means of an image being the exact opposite of that by means of identity, all imitation which has the latter in view tends only to destroy itself, since in so doing it no longer aims at appearing imitation.

This idea may perhaps appear so simple that there can be no need of insisting upon it; perhaps also, its simplicity considered, it may be deemed little worthy of being converted into a principle; but I would observe that an elementary principle, before an opportunity has been afforded of developing its bearings, must necessarily be simple; if not, it is no longer a principle.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE IDEA TO BE FORMED CONCERNING RESEMBLANCE IN THE
IMITATION PROPER TO THE FINE ARTS.

RESEMBLANCE is without doubt a necessary condition of imitation. These two expressions and their corresponding ideas approach so nearly, that in ordinary language they are often taken for one another; but this is not the greatest error. It consists in confounding *resemblance by means of an image*, or that of the fine arts, with *similarity by means of identity*, or that of the mechanical arts.

It is of importance to the theory which it is here designed to establish, to determine also the precise nature of imitative resemblance, and the limits within which it is confined, since in this respect there exists so much error, no less on the part of those who, by extending, think to increase the domain of every kind of imitation, than of those who deem that the pleasure ought to be greater, in proportion as the resemblance is more homogeneous. It will be well also on this point

✓ to examine the nature of things ; for, in order to lay a firm foundation, it is scarcely possible to dig too deep.

Be it in whatever it may, does the idea of resemblance carry with it the necessary conclusion, that, where it exists between two objects, there can be no difference between them? No one does or can understand it in such a light ; for, if it were maintained that such ought to be the definition of resemblance, it would only serve to prove that it cannot exist. The very works of nature, or what we have called the results of an organic power, when we find them invested with such resemblance as to create confusion among them, only appear so to us on account of our inattention ; viewed nearer, and subjected to a more strict examination, they present to us very great varieties. These varieties are so numerous, that experience, conjointly with reason, obliges us to acknowledge that there are not, for instance, two leaves entirely alike.

The same may be said of all the mechanical productions of human industry. We defy it, by any means whatever, to produce in the works it elaborates with the greatest care, a complete resemblance, so multiplied are the causes which conduce to diversify them.

✓ The idea of a complete resemblance is then, in speculation, but an abstraction, and, in reality, a chimera. If there can only be a question of an

approximate resemblance, even in those works whose similarity is the result of an organic or mechanical principle, the same may with still greater truth be affirmed of resemblances produced by an imitation, which does not repeat the object in reality, but only by an image.

This then is the elementary principle which should never be lost sight of, in estimating the nature and the properties of that resemblance, which it is the part of imitation to produce in the fine arts.

Now the fundamental idea of this kind of resemblance is afforded to us by the idea we have of what an image is; and this idea is exceedingly simple.

It will be sufficient to observe that an image is nothing more nor less than an appearance of the object represented. There is, between the object and its appearance, all the difference that separates that which truly is from that which only appears to be: and the same may also be applied to resemblance, since that which belongs to the image is nothing else than an appearance of resemblance.

It is the identical repetition of an object which produces the resemblance that may be called real, and which, from that very circumstance, is incapable of affording us pleasure; for it has been already seen that the pleasure arising from resemblance proceeds from the comparison instituted between two objects. But, morally speaking, it

is not true that, in resemblances produced by means of identity, two objects are seen ; it is but to see the same thing twice.

It is, on the contrary, the very essence of imitation in the fine arts, to represent *reality* by its *appearance* alone. Here then are two distinct objects. The pleasure of resemblance arises from the parallel itself, existing between the model, and its appearance or image. Since it is a necessary condition of imitation, that it furnish occasion for comparison, and since the art of comparing ceases where identity is present, it is necessary that we should be aware that what is offered to us by imitation, is only the appearance of the object.

Such is the fundamental and elementary character of that resemblance which belongs to the image, that is to say, to the result of imitation in the fine arts.

We may hence conclude that imitation would be no longer imitation, but identical repetition, if it were permitted to reproduce the *real* resemblance of the object, that is, to represent it under all those relations which constitute its reality. Again, that the image, in as much as it is an appearance, can only furnish an incomplete resemblance of the object imitated, in other words, limited to certain of its parts, its qualities, and its properties. Yet further, that the image, solely in that it is an image, can only produce its resemblances in and by means of the distinct elements

of those of the model, and by such as cannot be mistaken. Finally, we may come to the conclusion, that imitative resemblance is that which compels us to see one object in another, and that a distinct and, relatively to the total of the general model, necessarily partial one.

On these conditions rest the merit and pleasure of imitative resemblance.

The merit, because, in fulfilling these, as we have seen, lies both the difficulty of the art, and its success, which consists in so ordering things that we shall not have cause either to complain of, or to discover what is wanting to the imitation in order to render it complete, and to appear reality.

The pleasure, because it is always from our knowing the want of reality in the image, that the faculties of comparing and judging are called into action, for which, without this knowledge, there would be no occasion.

If imitative resemblance in the fine arts can only be a partial and fictitious resemblance of the object imitated, and if it can only be produced with and by means of elements distinct from the elements of that object, it must be acknowledged that the conditions of imitation, far from being the result of a system, are only facts observed in and drawn from the nature of things. Hence it will assuredly follow, that every image, or every work of the fine arts, will more or less contradict the nature of imitation, in proportion as the artist has

aimed more or less at producing the effect of identical repetition, or real similarity.

We shall presently show, that there exist, nevertheless, two grand sources of error, distinct only as they differ in degree, which constantly tend to vitiate, in its very elements, that imitation which is proper to the fine arts, to destroy its beauty, and nullify its means of pleasing, by affecting to increase the one, and multiply the other.

As it is especially against these two errors, so inimical to the fine arts, that this theory is directed, I will proceed, after having pointed them out, to show the result I propose to obtain, and the course to be pursued to arrive at it.

✓ The first of these evils which it is necessary to contend against, consists in the endeavour to augment the resources and the effect of the species of imitation proper to one of the arts in particular, by the addition of those proper to the imitation of another art. (See Chap. ix.)

✓ The second tends to deprive every art, as much as possible, of that part of its fictitious and conventional nature which makes it appear art, by substituting, through a spurious fidelity, the character of reality for that of appearance, and similarity by means of identity for resemblance by means of an image.

But before exposing in all their nakedness the vices of these two modes of procedure, and the fallacious results arising from them, it will be

necessary to pursue the development of the principles that have been established, as a general theory, by applying them more directly to each of the fine arts considered individually; and to show how the constitution of each of them carries us also back per force to the elementary principle of imitation; so that the principle of the elementary definition of imitation must yet further become that of the definition of every imitative mode proper to each of the fine arts in particular.

CHAPTER III.

THAT THE RESEMBLANCE WHICH IT BELONGS TO EVERY ART
TO PRODUCE, CAN ONLY BE A PARTIAL ONE.

HITHERTO we have been, by the very nature of things, endeavouring to search out the elementary principles of imitation and imitative resemblance; principles from which we hope to be able to deduce doctrines and rules of taste, whereon to found a general theory of the fine arts.

It is now time to quit the more or less obscure region of generalities, and, proceeding to an order of things less abstract, show that each one of the fine arts considered as acting by imitation, can exercise but one branch of it, and that, by the very fact of the restriction thus placed upon its power of action, it corroborates the evidence of those principles which have been already laid down.

The only cause for the division of the imitation of nature, among the fine arts, exists in its being impossible, as already shown, for any one art to

attain identity or reality of resemblance, which is in fact but repetition.

Certain indefinite phrases have been the cause of confused ideas gaining credit with the generality of persons, and which, in this matter, serve to perpetuate the errors that continually obscure it. Thus it is again and again propounded that nature is the model of the arts: an axiom as true as it is insignificant. Then, what is said of the arts in general, is repeated of each one in particular; and forthwith there is no subdivision of an art which has not nature for its model.

And this is all true enough; but then the model of every art, or, in other words, of every part of the demesne of imitation, must in like manner be restricted to a part only of nature.

The different arts of imitation are not inventions of man, the creations of his fantasy, that he can extend or modify them at will; nor can the productions of those arts be changed in obedience to his pleasure. Each, submitting to the supreme laws of the nature of things, or of necessity, is compelled to be exclusively in relation with such or such order of imitable objects, with such or such means or instruments of imitation, with such or such qualities physical or moral, with such or such faculty of our senses or mind; and to which there is also a necessary relation between each of these things and the corresponding art which takes cognizance of it.

The different imitable objects are evidently classed under two principal heads: viz., those which belong to the moral,* and those which depend on the physical order of things; the one addressed peculiarly to the faculties of the mind, ✓ the other directly to the organs of the body. Hence the principal division of the fine arts.

These arts are then distinguished from one another by the difference of their efficient model, by the difference of their instruments, and by that of the faculties or organs that nature has placed in reciprocal relation with them.

It follows, from the evidence that determines their distinctiveness, that it is impossible for any one of them, in its own respective attributes, to add to its imitative resemblance the means and effects which belong to the imitative resemblance of another.

I say *impossible*, because if on the one hand, it be admitted that, in matters of taste, there is no abuse which is physically impossible, on the other, whatever is false and vicious, must be looked upon as morally impossible. But the sequel of this discussion will show that there is also a kind of material or matter-of-fact impossibility, in the mingling one art with another, since, as we have seen, the very means by which it is thought to

* An explanation of the sense in which this word has been employed throughout the work will be found at the close of Chapter i. Part II.

add to the power of imitation, tend only to weaken and often to destroy it.

I will here adduce an instance, and will select it from the two arts most nearly approaching one another. I mean painting and sculpture, both having for their object the imitation of bodies, and both being addressed to the same organ, that of sight. Now what have these in common? The one represents bodies by their colour, and the other by the relief of their forms. Nevertheless, the model which serves for both, unites relief and colour, and these two are blended so intimately together, that they can be divided only in thought.

Without any exception, that art which employs colour, cannot aspire to relief; nor can that which appropriates to itself relief aim at truth of colouring. What then is it that prevents these two from uniting? Many moral reasons may be given; but I will instance one wholly material or technical.

It is this: that provided colour could be applied to the figure of the statuary, the colouring would no longer be that of the painter. For if the attempt were made, even with the utmost skill, to lay on the sculptured head the tints of the coloured one, the elements of both would be opposed to each other. The colouring of a picture is only such in painting: let it be removed from the canvass, and it loses every thing, in

losing the fictitious atmosphere, which is the condition of its effect. Artificial colour upon an isolated body can never appear true, precisely because all around it being real can serve only to convict it of falsity.

Thus, imitation is nullified by the very endeavours that are made to increase or multiply its means; and thus one art, by trenching on the properties of another, loses its own, and by aiming to be both, becomes neither.

I have chosen this illustration, because it is within the reach of every body, and that the result cannot be disputed. Experience having to deal with matters of fact, there is no refuting that of which the senses are at once the witnesses and judges. We shall see, nevertheless, that the only difference between the error of which we have just spoken and a multitude of other errors that daily arise within the circle of these same two arts, is that which exists between the physically impossible and the morally impossible; that is to say, between that which clashes with the senses and that which violates the reason. In vain are both taste and the celebrated works of art appealed to against all attempts at identical repetition of objects, and the futile ambition of producing reality instead of imitative appearance; the rule of taste allows over-much freedom, while the sceptre of authority appears too tyrannical.

In subjects such as these, we must penetrate

more deeply, and endeavour to lay a foundation for rules, by establishing a principle drawn from the very essence of things.

If in truth the limits which separate the *demesne* of every individual art are fixed by nature ; if these limits, so called, or the separations which serve to isolate every mode of imitation, are precisely defined (as will be shown hereafter) by the irreconcilable difference of the model to be imitated, and the means by which it is imitated ; of the especial qualities of objects, and the exclusive properties of organs ; and, lastly, of the faculties, whether physical or moral, called to pass judgment on the works of art ; what can be concluded therefrom but that nature, or the supreme law, wills that each mode of imitation should be confined within the separate bounds assigned to it ?

If then the artist transgresses limits thus appointed and acknowledged as invariable, be it in whatever manner and to whatsoever degree it may, all disputes ought to be at an end. The fact is immutable, and the law which must condemn it irrevocable. In whatever way the artist may have sought to heap together and reunite, in one and the same work of art, the means, the processes, the objects, and the effects which belong to another mode of imitation, in order to attain a more real resemblance, he has overstepped the bounds, which are assigned as those of an image, to fall more or less into identity. Wish-

to deceive, and deceiving in order to please, he has thereby lost all right and all power of pleasing those who require of the arts the charm of imitation, and not the fraud of counterfeit. Let him then address himself to those who wish to be deceived, or who deserve to be so, that is, to the ignorant.

OF IMITATION.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSEQUENCES DRAWN FROM THE FOREGOING DEFINITION
AND IDEAS ARE EQUALLY APPLICABLE TO POETRY AS TO
PAINTING.

It has been established as an elementary principle of imitation in the fine arts, that *to imitate is to produce the resemblance of a thing in some other which becomes the image of it.*

Having distinguished two kinds of resemblance, the one *identical*, being in fact only the repetition of a thing by the thing itself; the other *imitative*, being the repetition of a thing by some other which becomes the image of it; it must follow from this distinction, that the idea attached to the word *image*, is that which characterizes such resemblance as is proper to imitation in connection with the fine arts.

But to render this theory general, the definition of imitation, and the terms which constitute it, must be alike consistent with all the fine arts, as well those that are addressed to the senses, as those addressed to the mind.

Now it is possible that the word *resemblance*, and yet more, *image*, may here occasion some difficulty. *Image*, it may be urged, can be understood only of the works of painting, and the graphic arts. If it is to the eyes that a resemblance attained by means of an image is addressed, how can a condition, which ought only to be binding on some of the arts, enter into an elementary principle which is sought to be rendered common to them all?

I might answer that the employment of the word *image* is by no means unusual in poetry, and every one is aware of the metaphorical acceptance of it, borrowed from painting. It is true that this name is generally appropriated to certain conceptions of detail, to partial expressions or descriptions; but this instance will suffice to authorize the employment of it in a more extended relation, if it can be shown that the arts of poetry, like those of design, possess also the power of producing two sorts of resemblance, identical and imitative, that they can also be concerned about the imitation of reality by reality, instead of adhering to a mode equivalent to that to which we apply the word *image*. Be it only understood that the words *image* and *reality* are here, as is the word imitation itself, taken in an analagous signification, and a sense altogether as true, though of a less material truth, equally in speaking of poetry as when applied to painting.

It must be confessed that all the forms of composition in poetry do not possess the property of imitation in the same degree ; this depends in general on the kind of subjects which fall within the scope of each. But since poetry treats of subjects (and those indeed the most numerous) in which persons are to be made speak and act, and in which verbal descriptions of things, actions, emotions, and manners are requisite, who will contend that the expression of these may not be the effect of imitation, morally understood ? Now the effect of such imitation is to produce a moral image, that is, one addressed to the mind. And if this be indisputable, it is equally so that to poetry, as to painting, may belong the reproduction of objects either in such a way as to constitute reality, or in such as would rightly be consistent with an *image*.

One instance of this among many others, that the sequel of this work will afford (see Part II. Chap. iii.) is the servile reproduction, by the writer, in the language he attaches to his interlocutors, of thoughts, set forms of speech, common phrases, or expressions of vulgar language ; this surely is the repetition of reality, instead of imitative resemblance. It is evident in this instance, that the thing to be reproduced by imitation, namely, the dialogue, is not reproduced in some other thing, that is, in another dialogue which becomes the image of it. It is evident that

there are not two distinct things, but the same twice over.

This is also expressed by the word *copy*; for copy, *copia*, means only a *double*. In fact, the whole of this analysis is little else than an exposition of the word copy, and the idea belonging to it. It would indeed have been made use of, but that in a subject where ambiguity is so easily attached to every word, custom had already given to the word *copy*, some significations which would confound the idea belonging to it with that of imitation.

In order to establish a parallel, on the point which now engages our attention, between poetry and painting, after having shown how, in the first, the thing imitated may fail to be an *image*, by being only a copy or identical repetition, it will suffice to cite in anticipation (see Part III. Chapter vii.) the resources, which the art of poetry has at command, in order to *reproduce the resemblance of things in some other things which become the images of them*. These resources are, for instance, the choice of words, arrangement of sentences, ideas, the employment of metre and rhyme, the expression of the language of the passions, metaphor, allegory, and all the varieties of style which this art has at its disposal, as so many means of exchanging reality for its representation, and, to speak precisely, the thing itself for its image.

As we have seen, the only difference lies be-

tween the nature of the thing to be imitated, and that of the thing which becomes the image of it; and this difference being that which sets a bound between the order of moral, and the order of physical things, is also that of the arts themselves.

The elementary principle of imitation may then be applied to all the arts, and may be so applied in the terms of our definition, so that, when treating of the arts comprised under the name of poetry, what is termed the *image*, a necessary condition of all imitation, will be (as has been already shown) an image only to the eyes of the mind, while in the arts comprised under the name of painting, what is called the *image*, is such to the eyes of the body.

I think I have for the present (see Part II. Chapter ii.) where the same subject is resumed) sufficiently explained the sense in which I make use of the words *image*, or imitative resemblance, and *reality*, or identical similarity. But identity of resemblance is to be understood, not only (the words being taken in their material sense) of that which, in physical objects, is obtained by means of tracing, the mould, or the pattern, nor, in the before mentioned instance, the dialogue, of mere exact and literal repetition, but yet further (in accordance with the spirit of things) of all imitation which aims at appearing what it is not. Now such is the case when the imitator endeavours to carry similarity so far, as to excite an idea of the

employment of a mechanical process, or of an attempt at servile copy. In this view of the matter, the vice of identical similarity may be common alike to the work of the poet and that of the painter.

For instance; we term it the manner of identical similarity, in a painter, who, without having used either tracing, or the pantographe, would nevertheless appear servilely ambitious that his drawing should convey the idea of it; or again, who should employ (as did Denner, of Nuremberg) the magnifying glass, to assist him in reproducing with minute exactitude, in the copy of his model, the hair and the pores of the skin. We term it the manner of identical similarity, in a sculptor, whose aim is to excite belief that his figure was moulded from nature, although he may not actually have put in practice the process of moulding.

We maintain the very same thing, in poetry, of the different grades of partiality, evinced whether towards trivial language or thoughts, or the servile enumeration of details, whether towards technical fidelity in the description of corporeal objects, or physical properties, or whatever else it may be that is beyond the sphere of its means. (See Part I. Chap. ix.)

As a consequence of the foregoing observations, it is evident that our definition, thus developed, presents nothing, in any one of its terms, which may not be applied to the work of the poet, alike

with that of the painter, since the one and the other are alike capable of producing the effect and giving rise to the idea of identical similarity, instead of the effect and the idea of imitative resemblance, since, in short, each is capable of reproducing a thing by the same thing, instead of by its image.

But it will yet be urged as an objection, that the idea belonging to the word *image* cannot, more especially in the sense in which we have taken it, admit of an application so rigorously parallel in reference to the arts which are addressed to the mind. That the kind of confusion, between the object to be imitated, and the object imitating, which may, in poetry, arise to the mind, cannot be censured equally with that which takes place in the imitation of bodies, since the fault in question does not present the same degree of evidence, as that of which the physical senses are the judges.

To this I may reply, that the fault would be by so much the more flagrant and contagious, in proportion as it were more difficult to combat.

But what then! are there no faults but those that are detected by the physical sense? Has not the order of moral things its truths and its errors capable of being demonstrated to the judgment and understanding? For instance, would not the want of proportion in a production of the mind be, in its way, as real an imperfection, as the want of

proportion in a material work, and that merely because it cannot be admeasured by the compasses ? But the fact that, even in corporeal imitation, the physical organ or instrument frequently only confirms to the senses, the error or fault which had already been perceived by the mind, is wholly lost sight of.

It is the mind or the feeling of what is true that at once denounces the deceitful illusion of the graphic arts, when their respective processes are mingled together in one and the same work ; and when the physical organ points out the impossibility of it, (as has been seen in the preceding chapter,) it does no more than confirm the sentence already passed by the judgment and the taste.

Since then the mind is competent to condemn this fault in those arts which are neither solely nor directly addressed to it, why is the same judge incompetent, when the question concerns errors committed in its own proper jurisdiction,—in what falls within its own peculiar office ? Why, in the arts of poetry, should it not condemn with the same correctness, that twofold employment of means, that mingling in one work the properties of different arts, if such a heaping together produces, as regards the mind, the same kind of confusion, as that of which the senses testify the reality ; if, in short, resemblance by means of an image is, in

like manner, found to be destroyed by aiming at identical similarity ?

Let there then be no longer any objection raised, on the score of the natural difference between the arts of moral, and of physical imitation. What is true of the one, is true of the other, and we shall presently see, that the boundaries which separate each kind of imitation, as well the arts comprised under the name of poetry, as the arts of corporeal imitation, are absolutely impassable, if it be true that they can only be violated by faults which carry confusion into imitation, and thence destroy the pleasure which it is otherwise calculated to afford.

CHAPTER V.

NATURE HAS PLACED SEPARATIONS AS REAL, BETWEEN THE
ARTS OF POETRY, AS BETWEEN THOSE OF DESIGN.

PROOF THE FIRST;

*Drawn from the diversity of the faculties of the mind and of
the qualities of the objects available for imitation.*

THE domain of imitation (as already laid down Chapter iii.) is divisible into two very distinct regions; the one, consisting of the arts whose model is physical nature, the other, of those which have moral nature for their model. The distinction is here reduced to its most simple expression, and it is sufficient merely to point it out, without adding proofs of what is self-evident.

It can, however, be scarcely expected that the particular limits of each art should be perceived with the same clearness as those of the two grand divisions above mentioned. Moreover, the barriers placed by nature on the confines of each of the arts, are more readily distinguishable, when the model is more or less material. Some of these separations are so cognizant to the senses, that

confusion regarding them is, in some cases, quite out of the question. Every one, for instance, knows that painting has no power of making the personages it represents speak to the ear, that the reality of motion, which properly belongs to the mimic art, is unattainable in sculpture, that the images which music presents are not intended for the eye. It cannot be necessary to prove such things as these to be incompatible; and, in adducing them, it is only as demonstrated premises of a theory whose part it is by sure deductions to establish the exclusive property to which each of these arts is entitled. We shall hereafter have occasion to speak of the mistakes and reciprocal encroachments that take place respecting them.

On the other hand, when the arts which have moral nature for their model, are in question, the confounding them, or the trenching of one upon the properties of another, does not to the generality of persons appear so real a violation. Why? — Because the limits, by which the modes of moral or poetical imitation are separated, are not in an equal degree palpable to the senses. And since it belongs to the understanding, the judgment, or the sentiments to determine them, it is hence evident how great scope is afforded, in criticism of this nature, for paradoxical subtlety to elude the strictness of a demonstration which cannot be other than of an abstract nature.

We have, throughout, endeavoured to show,

and we think we have succeeded, (see the close of the preceding chapter,) that the rule of truth, in cases of imitation more especially related to the mind, acquires a moral evidence, equivalent in its kind, to that which the senses compel us to recognize in the imitation of physical and corporeal things.

We will then proceed to show the reality of the barriers existing between the arts of moral imitation, or the different forms of poetry; and further, that, nature having here also established limits, to transgress them, in whatever manner it takes place, is to transgress the natural laws by which this branch of imitation is regulated.

In order to prove the separations which nature has imperatively established between the several arts of the poetical domain, or of the mind, we shall be contented to advert to the entire similarity which theoretical analysis displays as connecting these arts with those of corporeal imitation.

We have seen that among the differences on which the limits that divide all the arts are founded, those of the organs and faculties to which the several arts are necessarily addressed, and those of the qualities inherent in the objects of every form of imitation, hold the first rank.

Thus the first fact from which the natural separations between the arts of moral imitation are deduced, is that the mind is composed of

faculties as different from each other, as are the organs of the body.

The second fact is, that the objects which afford matter for moral imitation, are composed of qualities as different from each other, as are the properties of bodies, and that these qualities severally correspond as exclusively to certain faculties of the mind, as do the physical qualities with the organs of the body.

We have cited as a primary fact, as one which admits of no controversy, that the mind is composed of different parts, which are its distinct and separate organs. They are universally acknowledged under the names of understanding, reason, sentiment, imagination, &c. ; names expressive of the different ideas which we conceive of those faculties and their operations. They are distinguished in language, because their effects cannot be confounded. Who is there that, in accounting to himself for these effects, though ever so superficially, does not rest convinced that to perceive is not to imagine, that the act of comprehending is other than that of reasoning, that the faculty of distinguishing the relations of things or their impressions, does not at all resemble that of memory?—This is no part of our system ; but a fact already observed, and acknowledged as such, in metaphysical science.

But this fact admitted, it as certainly follows

that any one of these faculties can only perform one and always the same operation, which also is sufficiently acknowledged to preclude the necessity of farther insisting on it in this place.

Every one will at once remark the similarity existing between those faculties which we call the organs of the mind, and the physical organs, which are the faculties of the body.

If the mind, like the body, has its different senses or organs, readily distinguishable from one another by the particular and distinct nature of their operations, then the arts of the mind or the modes of moral imitation and the mental organs we have above recognised must of necessity be severally so related in an exclusive and especial manner, the one to the other. For instance, the forms of composition into which poetical imitation is divided, must be each singly in relation either with the perceptive, the imaginative, or the reasoning part of the mind.

It may be taken for granted, that there is no work emanating from the mind, in which imitation is in any degree concerned, that does not, more or less, directly correspond with one or other of the faculties of which the mind is constituted. It is sufficient to open any one of the numerous treatises on literature or the art of poetry to find abundant proofs of this. What is their principal object, unless it be, after having analyzed and classed the different forms of composition employed

in the art of poetry, to appropriate to each its own particular kind of invention, composition, taste, tone, measure, diction, style, according as each of those forms is more or less allied to one or other of the faculties of the mind.

I may also, without undue anticipation of the corollaries of this theory, remark, that all critics, though without deducing their precepts from the elementary principles of imitation such as I have elucidated them, arrive notwithstanding at the same result. Guided by instinctive truth, and the influence of the example and suffrage of every age, they are all unanimous in condemning the anomalies arising from a non-observance of appropriate forms of composition, and the improprieties of character which result from it. But these anomalies and improprieties are alone occasioned by a want of due regard, on the part of the author, to the organ he addresses himself to, or, which is the same thing in its consequences, from neglecting the imitative means specially in relation with that organ.

Thus errors, about which all the world is agreed, afford the most incontestible proof of the existence of distinct faculties of the mind, and of the separations that nature has established between them.

The second fact on which reposes the evidence of these separations between the faculties of the mind, and, consequently, between the different

arts of moral imitation, is (as we have already said) that the objects about which it is employed, possess qualities to the full as distinct from one another as those of physical imitation, and of which any intermixture is morally impossible.

The principal objects of moral imitation, namely those which are least of all dependent on the senses, must be the affections, the sentiments, the ideas, and those immaterial relations naturally attached to subjects that poetry affects. Now the affinity existing between these objects and the subjects that poetical imitation deals with, imposes a necessity that those subjects should correspond exclusively with some one or other class of ideas, sentiments, passions, &c. Thus it is the necessary co-relation of the nature of the subjects treated by the poet, with the nature of the objects of his imitation, viz. the ideas, sentiments and passions which he has to express, that really establishes the separations between the forms of composition in poetry; the separations existing between the objects to be imitated also considered.

There is, then, a class of sentiments, affections, passions, and ideas, which, by reason of their particular qualities, are appropriated to some one or other class of subjects, and, consequently, to some one or other of the arts of poetry.

Let us now quit for a while this region of abstraction, in order to illustrate this position by an

example. That branch of poetical imitation denominated *tragedy* has for its principal object, the expression of the two emotions designated by the names *terror* and *pity*. The subjects of which the tragic drama treats must therefore of necessity correspond with this class of emotions, and these subjects will consequently possess qualities necessarily as distinct, as are physical qualities from each other. We may easily be convinced of this, by comparing the object of tragic, with that of comic, imitation, which latter consists in the expression of the two emotions *mirth* and *malice*, produced by ridicule and satire. The qualities proper to the object and subjects of this kind of art are evidently devoid of all connexion with those belonging to the object and the subjects of tragedy.

Such being the case, neither the one nor the other of those two arts can appropriate what nature has not assigned it, and we shall find that in reality no art whatever can do so, without thereby renouncing its very existence.

If there be a certain order of sentiments or passions proper to every kind of art of the mind, as there is of physical properties corresponding separately each to each kind of art of the senses, the existence of the same separations in the order of ideas constituting moral imitation cannot be disputed. That is, that to those ideas are attached qualities differing from or contrary to each

other, whose difference constitutes the elementary principle of division between the forms of composition, or arts, of poetry.

Thus lyric poetry is distinguished from all other by its loftiness, and pastoral, by its simplicity, qualities inherent in the subjects they have to do with. Thus too, epic poetry can neither lend to, nor borrow from, another form of composition, the heroic and the marvellous which constitutes its peculiar character.

In whatever way that which constitutes the general model of moral imitation, or of the arts of poetry be analyzed, it will always present a diversity of aspects, similar to that of physical imitation; it will be seen that no art can include more than one of them, because they are each, by the laws of nature, limited to one alone; hence the conviction will follow, that those laws are founded on the elementary separations of the faculties of the mind, to which every art is bound to address itself separately, and on the qualities of the objects of imitation, which cannot be combined in one and the same image. In fact, as we shall hereafter see, the very unity of the mind incapacitates it from receiving two simultaneous impressions from two imitations at once, that is, at one and the same instant, and from one and the same art, in one and the same work.

CHAPTER VI,

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

PROOF THE SECOND;

Drawn from the principle of unity in the mind, and from the unity of its action, from which results the principle of imitative unity, and from this again the separations established between all the arts.

THE erroneous idea too frequently entertained concerning imitation in the fine arts, the kind, and still more the degree, of resemblance, which it belongs to each of those arts to produce, leads the majority of persons to believe, that the more numerous are the sorts of resemblance comprised by a single art, the more lively will be the pleasure derived from its works. Hence the tendency on all hands to seek to advance the arts beyond the bounds of their own particular domain, and, encroaching on the legitimate province of the neighbouring art, to appropriate more or less some part of the imitative resemblance which by nature is denied them.

It may be readily perceived, that there are certain arts, which, either because they have to deal with a part of the common model bordering closely on that of another, or that they employ like instruments, or are in relation with the same organ, or address themselves, and this is more especially the case in the moral world, to some faculties of the mind which approximate through their mutual analogy, it may, I say, be readily perceived, that such arts will, in a more or less direct manner, endeavour to encroach on the territory of others.

I have already remarked that the evidence that gross violations of this kind carry with them, renders them less dangerous (see the preceding chapter) nor is it against such as are there alluded to, which indeed convict themselves, that I here purpose to hold out a warning.

There are certain caricatures of imitation, the vulgar apings of living nature, which, whether produced by means of colour, relief, or motion, are beyond the pale of our theory. The encroachments I would speak of are less open to detection. For instance, though sculpture cannot steal from painting the natural colour of objects, it does, nevertheless, too frequently pretend to dispute with it, those kinds of subjects which owe their true value to the effect of colouring and ærial perspective, and the art of the sculptor has been seen to attempt in stone, the production of skies, distances, and landscapes. In like manner the

painter will be found treating subjects that narrative alone can give a value to or render intelligible; and the dramatic poet making excursions into the territory of the historian or the epic poet, &c., &c.

Thus each believes that by heightening the degree of resemblance proper to his own particular art, he is augmenting the pleasure it is fitted to afford, and by re-uniting what nature has separated (that is, imitative qualities corresponding to distinct organs, and to dissimilar faculties) he is providing an additional enjoyment for the mind.

The mind, by its refusal to acknowledge the pleasure of this twofold employment of imitation, together with the moral impossibility of our receiving two impressions at the same time, affords further proof of the reality of those separations, and of the necessity for paying attention to them, and they also fully demonstrate the pernicious tendency of heaping together the distinct means of imitation, or of any other mode of bringing about an entire resemblance in the imitation of the fine arts.

I have already said that moral impossibility is the only one, about which, in the arts of imitation addressed to the mind, there can be any question. I now go a step farther. Although I have shown, that certain intermixtures, in those arts, the imitation proper to which is addressed to the senses, are physically impossible, yet as the impressions

produced by those arts having always the physical organ as an intermediate channel, nevertheless finally appeal to the internal sense, it is perfectly just to say that every discussion on these matters must terminate before the tribunal of reason, sentiment, and taste.

Let it then be borne in mind, when, throughout the development of this our theory, a thing is said to be impossible, it is not so meant with reference to the absolute fact. Experience but too truly teaches us that every blunder, every error is possible. What we declare to be impossible is, the imitative effect the desire of which is the inducement to the committal of such like errors; and the augmentation of resemblance and pleasure which is sought and believed to be found, where in truth it does not exist, and by mixtures which are inadequate to achieve it.

We would here be understood to call every means impossible in its result, or in other words, impossible of success, that departs from the circle of true imitation, such as it has been defined, every thing which may tend to outrage reason and taste, and every combination of the arts, brought about only by contravening the laws of their nature. Thus it is not the fact of the error that is termed impossible, or, where the word is made use of, it is in the same sense, as when a false concord in music is said to be impossible, although nothing can be more possible than a discord.

In these matters every thing must then be referred to the internal sense.

Whatever be the art in question, whatever the means, whatever the process it employs, and to whichever of the corporeal organs it is addressed, its effect, as we have said, always appeals to the mind in the end, and from it receives its final judgment. We may, in this sense, assert, that it is not the eye that sees, nor the ear that hears; for those organs are but ministers appointed to convey the impressions produced on them by the arts, to one or other of the faculties of the mind, the common and only centre.

The unity of the mind is one of those truths whose demonstration we readily find within ourselves. It is every instant revealed to us by the unity of its action, and the very relations of our senses with that action furnish us proofs without end. Every one of our senses tells us that it cannot receive simultaneous impressions from several objects at once. In fact, no two senses can be *actively* employed at the same time, nor can any single one be strongly affected, at the very same instant, by several or even by only two sensations. I say *actively*, because in truth, all our senses are endowed with an active and a passive virtue, and it is by the effect of this double quality that we are enabled to see, at one and the same time, two objects distant from each other. There is, however, in such case, a great difference be-

tween the manner in which each is viewed. One only is seen intuitively ; I can attentively regard only one at a time. I may hear several sounds together ; but can listen only to one. There is a like difference between smelling and scenting, between touching and feeling.

We shall again advert to this topic, (see Chap. viii.), when we come to treat of the degree to which, in certain instances, the combination of different arts may be permitted.

The manner in which associations of this kind take place, as well as the circumstances attendant on the mind's enjoyment of them, will serve only the better to prove this truth: viz., that, as the mind enjoys the work of imitation only by forming a judgment respecting it, as it cannot judge without an active participation, and as it can perform but one action at the same time, so it can only be affected by a single image, that is, by the effect of a single mode of imitation or of a single art at the same time.

This arises from the very constitution of the mind, that one concentric point, where only all sensations meet, and its unity debars it from experiencing two at once in an equal degree.

* The action of the mind frequently gives rise to illusion ; and the rapidity of that action is the cause of its movements not being distinctly comprehended. The mind glances rapidly over the objects presented to it, and passes with so much

celerity from one sensation to another, that its operations appear simultaneous, while in fact they are, notwithstanding, successive. Thus it appears to apprehend by one and the same intuitive act both the form of a body, and the colour with which that form is invested; but it can only enjoy, one after the other, the impressions produced by the form and the colour. }

It is one thing for the mind to receive impressions, and another to make them its own. Perception may be rapid, but it requires attention to profit by it. It is also worthy of remark, that this rapid transition, of which the mind is capable, seldom takes place but with regard to objects that are indifferent to it, trivial ideas, or feeble sensations. This will, hereafter, (see Chapter viii.) serve to explain the peculiarities of those works which are produced by an intermingling of the means common to several of the arts.

But, as the end proposed in the outset of this chapter, was to establish, by additional evidence, the reality of the distinctions or separations placed by nature between the several fine arts, we cannot better fulfil that end than by proceeding to show how it happens, that the mind, to please which is their common object, cannot enjoy two effects at once, nor, consequently, the impressions produced by a two-fold or multifarious imitation.

Now that such is really the case has been found

by the least attentive observation on the habitual action of the mind ; and in it we discover the incontrovertible principle of the unity of every art. Since the end of every art is to afford pleasure to the mind, then, if it be true that the mind cannot entertain two pleasures at once, it is evident that neither can two arts procure equally, and both at once, the pleasure to be derived from the imitation proper to one alone. It is clear that each must be presented separately to the mind, that is, to a part of it corresponding with a single mode of imitation, that is, through the intervention of a single organ, that is, by means of a single agent.

I again call attention to the difference between a durable and a fugitive impression, for it is a point on which misconception is very likely to arise. It is not indeed impossible to catch, in conversation, a few words from two persons speaking together ; but no one can follow out two speeches delivered at the same time. It is merely from the manner of expressing it, that Cæsar is said to have dictated two letters at once. The absolute fact is physically impossible. He had only the power of passing readily from one subject to another while dictating to two amanuenses. And it may be further remarked, that although he might do this by two letters of business, he could not have done the same thing in composing speeches to be delivered by two counsellors before the senate.

Whatever goes to prove the unity of the action of the mind, and the impossibility of its being so divided, as to pay attention to two concurrent sensations, equally tends to establish the law of unity in imitation, whether considered generally, as regards the respective properties of the several arts, or the elements of which the work of an individual art is composed. Every one will allow that unity is violated wherever the work of a single art presents more than one subject in a composition, one interest in an action, one character in a personage, one (principal) event in a poem, one historical trait in a picture, one point of sight in a view or perspective drawing, &c. &c. Under such circumstances, the mind would receive only disjunctive and incongruous impressions; it would pass more or less rapidly from one to another, but would experience neither an entire impression, nor a complete sensation. Not being actively affected, it would either not enjoy at all, or that enjoyment would be but feeble.

What, if any one in attempting this double employment of two arts, should endeavour to produce his effect, in a single composition, by an absurd combination of two kinds of imitation, presenting not only two themes, but those clothed in two different languages? — It will readily be conceded that this could in no wise tend to diminish embarrassment and confusion.

I am well aware, that, even though reason be constrained to yield to these manifold proofs, there is yet a lurking prejudice that will operate against them. This prejudice is the offspring of ignorance, prone always to require from works of imitation, that they should be precisely what those of nature appear. Although the foregoing analysis has proved that we cannot unite in a single act of vision, perception, and comprehension, the different properties united by nature in a single creature, and in a single subject, yet as the rapidity with which the senses and the mind operate, seems to render it easy to form a whole from such diversities of impression, art is required to furnish us with a similar aggregate. Thus it is expected to bring together in one and the same being, in a single image, motion, outline of form, and colour which speaks to the eye as the sound of the voice does to the ear: for all this does nature present to us in a single personage.

But it has already been observed that the error consists in applying the universal to what is only partial. In speaking of nature, we speak of an universal model; while in speaking of art, we notify only a partial image. In the theory of imitation what is termed a general law is that which results from the will of nature. She has not willed that the same art should unite two specific properties, two characteristic qualities of the same being; nor that two of those properties should be

identified in one and the same image, without mutually destroying each other; nor yet that two of our senses should be called into action together, &c. &c. It is then nature herself that has determined the separations between the several fine arts.

Nature therefore can only be imitated, by conforming to laws which she herself has imposed on imitation. Instead of imitating it would scarcely even be counterfeiting nature, to seek to unite in one object the different kinds of resemblance which she has immutably apportioned among all the arts, to each its particular share. Every art is therefore, both morally and physically, restricted to unity of object in its imitation, and unity of subject in its works. (See the subsequent Chapter.)

To nature alone it belongs to be at once singular⁷ and diversified, simple and complex, to unite in a single being dissimilar qualities, in a single action divergent incidents, in a single personage contradictory characters, to mingle in one homogeneous whole, opposites of every description. But there is a power in nature to obviate all discordancies; to shed harmony over every contrast; her palette has no antagonist colours; and we may also remark, that the objects she mingles together lose nothing of their entireness. With her every whole has parts, but yet every part is a whole. What she associates together is interwoven with-

out being mixed, is fused without being confused ; while art, if it endeavour to vie with the universality of nature, creates a medley of disjointed parts, mutilating all it combines, neutralizing whatever it mingles, and reducing the effect it would attain to a mass of confusion, by an assemblage of properties and qualities opposed to each other in their elements.

CHAPTER VII.

OF UNITY AND VARIETY IN IMITATION. — OF THE FALSE NOTIONS ARISING FROM A MISCONCEPTION OF THOSE WORDS.

A NECESSARY consequence of the unity of the mind, and the unity of its action, is the principle of the different laws of unity, the observance of which, imposed by nature on every imitative mode, and on every work of imitation, is a condition of their existence as such, and of their means of affording pleasure.

But this unity of the mind, when considered (see the preceding Chapter) in the effects which disclose it to us, and the unity of its action, when studied in the impressions we receive from objects, does not admit of being, and must not be, applied in so strict a sense as that we attach, for instance, to a mathematical point, or numerical unity.

It has been already observed, that the facility with which the mind can pass from one object to another, seems to us to endow it with a power of

giving to what is *plural*, the force and effect of *unity*; which is as much as to say that it transforms into a whole, parts remote or distinct from one another. But a limit is set to this faculty in the comparative distance or difference of objects; and it is for reason and taste to define that limit, since it is by the abuse of one or other of them, that those errors are committed, which it is our present purpose to correct.

If reason is so far abused as to restrict the idea of unity in imitation, by reducing it as nearly as possible to that of unity, mathematically understood, every art and every work of art will become so devoid of means, and so uniform in effect, that scarcely any scope will be left to the mind, and its action will be rendered next to useless.

If, allowing an excessive freedom to taste, the idea of unity, morally considered, be too far generalized, and the power of that faculty which the mind possesses of bringing near together and combining objects, be over estimated, every art will be compelled to abandon its unity, and become multiple, and every work will necessarily present to us, not well arranged images, but complications of images, which, instead of forming a whole, will consist of several incoherent wholes, and the mind with its utmost attention will be unable to grasp them.

The first of these two errors consists in con-

founding *unity* with *uniformity* ; the second, in taking *universality* for *unity*.

Uniformity far from being the same as unity, is, on the contrary, with reference to art and imitation, its very antagonist principle. The mind requires unity, because it requires that whatever is presented for it to view or comprehend, be, above all, clear and distinct, and because confusion is a source of toil. It is the simplicity attendant on unity that renders the act of viewing, comparing, and judging comparatively easy. But are we therefore to infer that the mind requires from painting, nothing more than figures arranged in a straight line ; from architecture than a façade without division and without details ; from the art of speaking than a discourse without alternations ; from that of singing than unisonant concords ; from the poet than a drama without action, recitals without fiction, compositions without episodes ? Assuredly not. On the contrary, it calls in variety to the aid of unity. Variety acts as a stimulant to excite and keep alive the appetite.

The very clear and simple notion of the two opposites of *unity* and *universality* will readily enable us to understand how little synonymous they are. As *plurality* is the opposite of *unity*, so, as we have already said in the preceding chapter, the opposite of the *universal* is the *partial*. It would therefore evince a total neglect, in theory, of the imitative unity belonging to every art, to

transfer the notion of art in general to that of a single art in particular, or to attribute to its individual properties the collective power of those that would belong to universal imitation, could such a thing exist. It would evince an equal neglect of imitative unity, in practice, to endeavour to substitute for the unity of the partial image, which gives only one of the aspects of the object imitated, the universality of the model, that is, in all its points of view; and to aim at crowding together in one work of art, by borrowing and filching from the properties of the rest, those qualities which nature, as we have seen, has divided and parcelled out among them all.

I should also be departing from the unity of my subject, did I follow out these few notions, in all the universality they would well require. In adverting to the two principal errors to which the notion of imitative unity is liable, I have merely endeavoured to shed some little light on a point, which the ambiguity of language has served to render still more obscure, and at the same time to explain clearly the sense in which I have here made use of the words *imitative unity*.

Now that sense is here rather that which belongs to the general idea of imitation, than to its particular acceptance, to the imitative system and not to the work of the imitator; in short, to the art rather than to its work. Not that I have forgotten the particular kind of unity belonging to

the work, and to which the artist is subjected in the composition and execution of his subjects, in order to render them clear, intelligible, and harmonious, to the eye and the mind.

But the law of this kind of unity is secondary, and is found to be necessarily comprised in the more general principle of *imitative unity*, belonging to art in the abstract, which principle imposes an obligation on every art to employ exclusively in the execution of its works, such imitative means as lie within its own proper sphere and prerogative.

The principle of imitative unity it is, that requires that each of the fine arts, and, in the same art, as poetry, each of the forms of composition, distinguished by name only, but separated from each other by nature, should be restricted from calling to its aid, in its own proper work, any other art, or form of composition in art, in order to add other and foreign resources to its own proper ones, — to increase the share of the universal model that belongs to it for imitation.

With a view to render the application of this principle of imitative unity still clearer, it will be well to exemplify it by a few instances drawn from the technical or material labours of some of the arts. By it, the sculptor is interdicted from aiming at the effect of distances or perspective drawing in his *basso relievo*; the personages in pantomime from speaking otherwise than by ges-

tures; the painter from treating more than one subject in a picture. It seems to me needless to enter into any lengthened disquisition to prove that the consequences of the same principle apply equally, in every art, to its most important, its moral part, which comprehends whatever is, in any of them, dependent on invention, taste in composition, choice of subjects, and all the properties inherent to their nature.

I can easily conceive that numerous innovators will exclaim against this restrictive system of imitation, and urge in opposition the want of that pleasure which arises from variety, that also being, as heretofore remarked, one of the wants of the mind not to be disregarded in imitation, and which assuredly it must be the artist's care to satisfy.

The same confusion of ideas is prevalent with regard to the notion of variety, as that of unity; which is natural enough, seeing that the notion of the one is dependent on that of the other. Thus nothing is so common as to see continually renewed efforts to attain imitative variety, not by legitimate means and within the circle of a single art, but by mixing together the heterogeneous elements of many, as though genius were too much straitened when confined within the limits of one department of imitation, and circumscribed within a horizon too narrow to furnish sufficient means of variety, as if those means were or could be exhausted.

Yet is not the field of nature, alike infinite in each of its parts, as in its whole, laid open to us? Is there any one province of any one art that does not correspond to some one of the parts or divisions of nature? If such be the case, is there a single art that fails in finding the infinite within the space allotted to it, and in which, consequently, the artist has not at command innumerable means of variety for his work? For instance, has a limit ever been assigned to the imitative variety of effects which the single art of painting can produce, by no other means than those of four colours, and without seeking beyond the subjects placed by nature at its disposal.

As each of the fine arts has its imitative unity, so each must have its corresponding imitative variety; but there can be no correspondence unless its means are restricted within the same circle of unity in art.

It is very evident that they who would substitute universality of imitation in lieu of imitative unity, are also desirous of exchanging imitative variety for diversity of imitation. The spirit of paradox, in subjects like the present, readily finds assistance, or takes refuge in those twofold meanings which the words of a language acquire in general usage, more especially such as admit only of a relative acceptation. Of this kind is the word *variety*, which sometimes through ignorance, sometimes from want of reflection, but more fré-

quently from a spirit of system, is employed as synonymous with other words expressive either of a different idea, or the same idea, though in a very different degree and under different relations.

It is however through a wilful perversion of terms, that *medley*, *confusion* and *divergence*, have ever come to be considered as variety, because, truly enough, there is *variety* in productions where *incongruity* and *confusion* are discoverable. But were those words in any wise synonymous, it must follow that, as in confusion there is variety, so in variety there must be confusion. The error betrays itself; and thus sufficiently establishes the distinction between the two ideas.

Will any one be bold enough to maintain that there is nothing more than variety, for instance, in those fantastical combinations of different natural objects, by which the imagination is sometimes pleased to create monsters? There would doubtless be a variety of species of animals in a picture representing to us separately the creatures which Horace, in his illustration of extravagance, has thought fit to join together. But if in a painting these several species were found jumbled together, and forming one monstrous, and ridiculous being, would it be variety, would it not rather be considered a masterpiece of incongruities and absurdities? *Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam, &c.*

Here then is a twofold example; first, of imi-

tative and legitimate variety allowing of none other than natural alliances ; and secondly, of corrupt and factitious variety occasioned by a promiscuous and unnatural mingling of heterogeneous beings, productive only of monstrosities.

Thus may the artist find an inexhaustible source of variety in the elements of his own art, those only being his proper instruments. But what he seeks to attain by an allayment of the different natures of two or more arts, is not variety. I say *allayment*, because that word is directly expressive of an idea very distinct from that of *union*. *Allayment* tends to form but one substance out of many ; while *union* leaves each material distinct.

Now, as we shall presently see, it is no infringement on the principle of imitative unity and variety, when different arts concur in a composition which may be the conjoint work of several, but only when they mingle together and surreptitiously intervene in what ought to be the work of a single art.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCERNING THE NATURE AND SPIRIT OF THE UNIONS FORMED
OF SEVERAL ARTS WHEN THEY ARE COLLECTIVELY EMPLOYED
ABOUT A WORK IN COMMON.

WE have already had occasion to maintain, (see Chap. vi.), that the mind cannot be susceptible of two impressions at once, that where several are received they must be received in succession, and that the impressions are slighter in proportion as that succession is more rapid.

In order to arrive at this conviction, let us examine more narrowly into what takes place in the operation of the senses.

It cannot have escaped the observation of any one that as the number of objects in propinquity to the eye is greater, it becomes less capable of including many of them within its range. At a farther distance, not only will the eye discern a greater number of them at once, but will be even able to regard several fixedly and together. Why is this? because, through the effect of distance the objects lose more or less of their apparent

individuality, and are formed into unions or groups. But the appearance of the object becoming then less defined, the impression made upon the organ is proportionably diminished. Such is precisely the case with simultaneous impressions, that is to say, with those that succeed each other rapidly. Thus a group of trees is seen in the distance of a landscape but as one tree; were they nearer, their component parts could only be viewed one after the other.

I must remark, before proceeding farther, that this in no wise invalidates the principle of unity of impressions, so necessary to the mind's enjoyment, since it is evident that several objects never produce a, so called, collective impression, except when they approach as nearly as possible to unity.

Toward this kind of unity, to form a whole of this nature, it is, that the unions of arts, concerning which I would now speak, tend, when employed about a work in common. Therein does both their peculiarity and their merit consist. It is a condition of the pleasure they procure, and without which, either they would fail to affect the mind or would occasion only an irksome and disagreeable sentiment.

There is a very sensible difference between what is called a union of arts, in order to produce a work formed from several works, and what I call a mixture of the elements of several arts, in a work proper to one only.

In a union, every art remains itself and its portion of labour is distinct. In a mixture of different arts, or forms of composition in the same art, each one is neutralized by the rest, and its share of work decomposed. In a union the mind can enjoy the labour of each art one after the other, by means of a more or less rapid transition, and can combine in one whole, what it has viewed separately. In a mixture, every part and the whole alike escape it.

When painting, sculpture and architecture concur in the embellishment of a gallery, that embellishment as a whole is a work in common to them all, and the effect of unity resulting from it, is the cause of the general pleasure that the eye experiences, notwithstanding that it cannot rest at the same time on a basso relievo and a picture.

When the means afforded by music, dramatic action, and vocal expression, are concurrently employed on the stage, in a common representation, one impression is, in like manner, produced by the agreement of those means, and another results from each of them separately. The mind, if it so will, enjoys each art separately, and all simultaneously on one point, and that point is the common link, the general harmony of the whole.

It is evident that there are, in these unions of arts thus brought together to co-operate to a work in common, two kinds of unity: the one that of

the individual and partial object, considered in its isolated state ; the other, that of the objects viewed together, which latter is the collective unity, by the effect of which the several constituent parts are assembled together and compose but one whole. But this kind of effect and the pleasure derived from it, arise from the circumstance that the works of those arts, being many, are formed into one, and not on account of the diversity of the combined arts, but because their diversity is merged into unity.

It is then wholly out of the question that, when different arts are associated for a common purpose, and in the production of a collective work, any single one should be intermingled with several others, or that forms of composition distinguished by qualities mutually incompatible, should be identified one with the other, since, on the contrary, each is bound to continue what it really is.

It is equally erroneous to suppose that, either the particular effect of any art, or the pleasure the mind expects from it, can be augmented by such contiguity, or that such an alliance can add to its own proper capabilities.

Far from arriving at the conclusion that the pleasure caused by the conjunction of several arts in a common work, arises from any additional imitative capacity they acquire from the combinations already pointed out, enabling them to

attain that totality of resemblance denied them by nature, we must, on the contrary, infer consequences the very opposite.

It must indeed be remarked that, in such associations, every art, though without losing the individual character that separates it from another, nevertheless most frequently loses a portion of its special value and effect. Employed in combination with other arts, it holds only a subordinate station, and is subjected to the laws of a harmony only partly related to its individual interest, and this general regulator neither allows it to do all it is capable of, nor to be all it might. Hence it happens that, in all unions of arts, as in those of instruments in a symphony, each one co-operates only by a part of its capabilities. In like manner it is a condition imposed, in every society, on all who contribute their contingent, that they shall be entitled only to a certain share of the resulting advantages.

It is then by no means true that every art, as is believed, gains by being associated with others, nor that the portion of imitative resemblance allotted to it, is augmented, much less rendered more complete. Far from such being the case, it is constrained to lose more or less of its own proper worth. But this loss, which really takes place with respect to every *associated* art, is compensated as regards the spectator or auditor by another kind of worth, arising from the pleasure

the collective whole or the general harmony affords.

A striking example of this is afforded us in the alliance of music and poetry on the stage. There is a considerable degree of affinity between these two arts, whether owing to the nature of the organs and faculties to which they are addressed, or to a certain similarity in the intellectual means of their imitation. Notwithstanding these points of coincidence, however, it has always been impossible either to melt the two into one, to effect an equal participation, or to enrich the one at the expense of the other. The one has always been found to lose, without the other being enhanced.*

Many persons have expressed astonishment that the master-pieces of ancient and modern lyric poetry have not excited the enthusiasm of our musicians. They complain that our ablest composers have not wedded their skilful notes, to the skilful conceptions of our dramatic poets. They regret, in short, that the most beautiful verses are not allied to the most beautiful airs. That astonishment, and that regret, are but the natural effect of the too common mistake regarding the nature of imitation in general, and that of the imitative allotment proper to each art.

* The reader who would try this theory by the test of conflicting opinion may turn to Chapter vi. of the Second of James Harris's Three Treatises.—*Tr.*

But that which prevents the master-pieces of poetry from becoming likewise those of music is, that they are already complete in their kind ; that they possess already all the fulness of imitative force, that is, all that is requisite to render the image such as to seem wanting in nothing, that no further addition appear possible. A musical composer, were he to adopt those master-pieces as the themes of his invention, would himself experience the difficulty of doubling, if one may use the expression, the finished images of the poet, by others equivalent to them in force or beauty, and would find himself conquered beforehand, without the opportunity to contend. His own charm would melt away before the virtue of another.

Suppose for a moment that we grant such an union in one and the same subject, and to an equal degree in a simultaneous execution of one of the most beautiful passages from poetry and music respectively, and admit, what is even less probable, that the mind can allow of it, that is, can take an active part in the experiment. The consequence would be that, as, owing to the close affinity between the executive means of these two arts, (supposing them thus combined,) there would not be a sufficiently sensible and real succession of impressions, the mind, instead of a twofold pleasure, would experience a twofold disquietude, from the conflicting demands of the two arts on its attention ; and, obliged unceasingly to divide itself

between both, would receive only interrupted effects, mutually annulling one another.

The examples of the past prove equally with modern facts how absolutely necessary it is that one of the two arts yield precedence to the other. Music in the ancient dramas was a mere accompaniment. Now-a-days, the drama is become an accessory to music. Indeed, in proportion as music gains strength, it requires more feeble verse, and the greater its own riches, the less does it need those of poetry.

“To guard a title that was rich before,
To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper light
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.”

But it will be said that we take pleasure in scenes and performances, where some sing, while others at the same time dance. In the first place, two different organs are here concerned. Moreover, the personages addressing them constitute merely what is termed the chorus. There is then nothing to employ the mind actively, there are but half impressions, with the instrumental part as an intermediate and connecting link. But do we ever find that the finest singer and the ablest dancer sing and dance together at the same time?

When we are all ear, can we likewise be all eye? Surely there is no one but must have experienced how contradictory and inopportune is a grand burst of decorative and scenic effect, allied with music, in which case the excess of pageantry and display tends to distract the attention from the progress of the singing. The mind is anxious, though unable, to divide its attention between impressions made at the same time on two different organs; hence the impropriety.

The principle of the unity of the mind has proved to us the necessity of unity of imitation, and the unity of the effect of imitation would, were it necessary, prove the unity of the mind.

The consequence of all this is, that, when several arts are united together in a common work, either they must be so presented to the mind as to give rise to distinct images, and successive impressions, or, in their association, the one must be so left in the background as to allow to the other its full force, or the effects of each must be so softened down as that, like the impressions of distant objects, whose individual forms (as before remarked,) are attended by the intervention of the atmosphere, they may seem to melt into one another. For, as experience teaches, the facility which the mind possesses of passing rapidly from one image to another, from the impression of one object to that of another, a facility on which is founded the system of unions in art, renders it

imperative that no one of the objects thus brought before the mind be, of itself alone, capable of arresting its attention, either wholly, or for any length of time.

Moreover, under these circumstances, the mind really loses in force and in quality, what it gains in number and diversity of impressions.

Such will in general be the effect of every combination of arts, when associated together for extensive works of embellishment, or public shows, &c. But the same effect is produced on the mind even by the work of a single art, when the composition of such work is of a multifarious character, as when a painter, by an extraordinary display of the resources of the picturesque, and the capabilities of colour, seeks to achieve, on an extensive scale, such a combination of ideas and objects, such a concourse of figures, groupes, and diversified masses, that their impressions are effaced as rapidly as they succeed one another. Those vast compositions suspended in the spacious and magnificent domes of our public edifices are here more especially alluded to, in which the bounds of the pictorial art are believed to have been extended and all its sources of enjoyment increased. Yet who is he that does not know, that has not learned from experience, that a larger sum of impressions may be received from a single figure within reach of the eye, than from the hundred and one figures of a lofty dome, all of which, as

individuals, escaping more or less the organ of sight, scarcely affect at all that of the sentiment.

I have considered it necessary, in treating of the nature of imitation, thus strenuously to insist on a theoretical point, the misapprehension of which so frequently occasions mistakes and contradictions, owing to the general habit of confounding what is here called a union of several arts combining to produce a collective work, with what should be denominated an admixture of the elements of several in one and the same art.

I have endeavoured clearly to explain the difference between two kinds or degrees of union, the one legitimate, the other spurious; the one involving no violation of propriety, no trickery as a means; the other founded on a false basis, and itself rendering nugatory the title by which it claims a right to existence.

But, above all, I have thought it necessary to do away with the ambiguity arising from the twofold employment of the words *union* or *association*, on a subject not hitherto enlightened by criticism, before attacking more directly the twofold error of the artist, who, neglecting the elementary principle of imitation in the fine arts, is at one time desirous of multiplying the imitative means of his own art at the expense of some other, (see the following Chapter), and at another adding to the degree of imitative resemblance it is either fitted or required to attain, by seeking that pretended increase in a system of servile copy, (see Chap. x.)

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE ERRONEOUS MEANS BY WHICH, EMPLOYED THROUGH A DESIRE OF COMPLETING OR INCREASING THE IMITATIVE TRUTH OF EVERY ART, THAT TRUTH IS DESTROYED.

FIRST ERROR OF THE ARTIST.

It consists in stepping beyond his own art to seek, in the resources of another, an increase of imitative resemblance.

THE same theory that enables us to discover the basis on which the conditions of imitation in the fine arts rest, enables us also to detect the chief cause of the errors that lead to their infraction.

Halting between two desires, the one that of satisfying the reason by a strict adherence to the elementary principle of imitation, the other that of ministering to the instinct which often gives the preference to identity, the artist is but too frequently led to confound the true pleasure of imitation, with the seductive charm of illusion, to forego the approval of the judgment and understanding, for the sole suffrage of the senses.

His first error (which forms the subject of this chapter) consists then in seeking the means of

procuring, sometimes for his image, and sometimes even for his art, an increase of imitation derived from resources wholly foreign to it.

We have already, in analyzing the constituent elements of every art, (see Chapter iii.) laid it down that all resemblance must necessarily be incomplete, and we shall presently, when reverting to the subject, further show that all imitative resemblance is of necessity *fictitious*. (See Chapter x.)

Before explaining how and by what means these two supposed defects become, on the contrary, the very cause of the beauties and pleasures of imitation, it will be well to put the imitator on his guard against the false and vicious correctives that zealous ignorance deems itself authorized to apply to them, arising from a mal-founded and still more mal-defined appreciation of the kind of community existing between the arts.

From the idea of that community, is generally derived the ambitious tendency of the artist to supply what I term the *incompleteness* of resemblance in every mode of imitation. Thus, according to the perverted interpretation of the passage in Horace, *ut pictura poësis*,* the conclusion is arrived at that the two arts, painting and poetry, are privileged to treat the same subjects, both in

* Horace, in this passage, which it is the custom to mutilate, does not say of poetry generally, that it is wholly similar to painting, still less does he say so of painting with regard to poetry. Horace merely says, and that in a very limited relation, that it

the same parts of those subjects and under the same aspects ; as though, for instance, there were no physical beauty, a real impression of which it would be impossible to convey in words, nor any moral beauty, to give the slightest idea of which, painting, be the genius of the painter ever so great, would be wholly inadequate.

The two compositions in which that great painter, Poussin, has represented the death of Eudamidas, and that of Germanicus, are objects of general admiration, and doubtless not without reason. But can the pencil express by means of

mute figures, the moral beauty of those subjects? In the first is seen a sick man dictating

his last wishes in the presence of two females, each afflicted according to the difference of their respective ages. But how can painting, by the

sole aid of pantomime which constitutes its language, render intelligible to the spectator the true

motive of the action, and reveal to him the affecting trait of friendship that makes the moral beauty

of that testament? Again, does any one think that the address of the dying Germanicus to his friends, as given by Tacitus, is either translated or countervailed in the scene of Poussin's picture?

Painting, which can with difficulty make it ap-

is in poetry, as in painting, some objects pleasing more when seen near at hand, others when at a greater distance.

Ut pictura poësis erit ; quæ, si propius stes,
Te capiet magis ; et quædam, si longius abstes.

pear that its personages speak, instead of adding to its field of operations by dealing with subjects that language is alone able to render intelligible, betrays the secret of its insufficiency, and is farther than ever from remedying the defect.

The frequency with which the painter is led to deceive himself in the choice of proper subjects, by this vain ambition of extending the sphere of imitation of his art, cannot be too strongly insisted on. The stage contributes unceasingly to the increase of such errors. There the artist is accustomed to see a kind of speaking pictures, formed by joint dramatic action and delivery, and he is thence induced to believe that he can transfer the same scenes to his canvass. It is true, he may as far as regards the eye ; but the picture is become mute, and its personages, in consequence, can no longer make us acquainted with what they are and what they do.

At other times we see, reduced within the frame of a picture, some grand event, the proper theme of the genius of history, or material of a poem. Mutilated rather than abridged, and of necessity centred within the space of a single instant, the historical fact becomes an enigma. Who, in such a fragment of space and time could divine the signification of a subject, whose development and intrinsic worth must depend on a sum total of objects, and a succession of actions and moral relations unattainable by the pencil ?

+ what follows in the 9th

~~Painting can transfix but one single instant of time in any action : it is constrained to omit both what precedes and what follows.~~ The subjects, therefore, best fitted for representation as being most in accordance with the kind of its imitation are simple ones, that is, such as are but little complicated in their impelling causes, and but little varied in their effects. We shall elsewhere, when treating of the *means of imitation*, (see Part III. Chapters ix. and x.) make known how the painter, by elevating his subjects into a higher sphere of physical and moral imitation, may extend the matter and multiply the springs of his compositions. But the only question for consideration in this *first part* is, as its title imports, to determine the exact nature of imitation in itself, and in its relations with the several fine arts ; an object which can only be attained by analyzing the physical and moral laws by which a limit is appointed to the particular sphere of activity of each. Now it is by one of those laws that the painter's art is precluded from the positive imitation of actions falling exclusively within the province of the narrator and the epic or dramatic poet, seeing that language written or spoken is their only adequate interpreter.

As a consequence of those same laws, the poet equally misapprehends the means and advantages of his art, when he requires it to treat certain subjects, the imitation of which must derive its

chief value from that property of painting which enables it to speak to the eye.

The remark has already been made by Lessing, ~~that the expression of bodily pains, and the representation of passions dependent on physical organization produce less effect in relation than in marble or on canvass.~~ It is certainly true that the poet portrays the painful affections of the mind better than the torturing ills of the body; and the reason is evident; for while writing and speaking serve to pour forth complaints of inward griefs, external anguish and torture is evinced only by ejaculations. The Greek dramatic poet makes Philoctetes utter cries, upon the stage, and the epic poet, for want of the reality of sound, has recourse to a simile, and substitutes the bellowing of a bull for the cries of Laocoon.*

- * "Clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit:
Quales mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram
Taurus et incertam excussit cervice securim."

ÆNEID, Lib. II. l. 221.

Some of my readers will, I trust, for the sake of others, excuse my citing here and elsewhere passages such as the above, when referred to by the author, who has throughout his work omitted to append them.

Payne Knight, *neglecting the above example from Sophocles*, has some remarks on this simile of Virgil, to which I would suggest a reference. See Part III. Chapter i., page 334 of the original edition of the "Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste."—(Translator.)

The inferiority of the poet to the painter is also very apparent in the imitation of objects, whose especial property it is to be addressed to the sight. Whatever his imagination may suggest in order to borrow from the art of painting the principle and force of its effects on the senses, will consist but of feeble countervails, due to a very unequal interchange of impressions. He will supply the place of a sun-rise, a cloudless sky, or a beautiful scene, by the more or less analogous ideas of candour, innocence, a tranquil state of mind, placed in correlation with the scenes of nature; for these are the true means of the poet, rising far superior to those of a talent for graphic description, of which hereafter. All this means that the sentiment excited in the mind by the sympathy existing between the moral and the physical, between the internal and external senses, leads us to picture to ourselves some scene. But every one will, notwithstanding, accommodate the landscape to his own fancy; and the poet will have been no more a painter, than the painter is a poet when his image is fitted to inspire the genius of the writer with other images equivalent to it.

Here then we see to what this community between painting and poetry, so often quoted and so ill understood, is in fact reduced; while it has been the only ground on which to rest their mutual claims to appropriate means of resemblance

alien to their respective natures, in order to complete what is wanting to them. (See further on this head, Part III. Chapter viii.)

The union of these arts has been held to be a true community of rights, while it is only a right of sharing in the universal heritage. Now a community of rights supposes the power of making use of the same things; a right of sharing, assigns to each one his own. Thus understood, the community spoken of not only does not countenance encroachment, but bars it, by determining the respective shares of the common model, within the limits we have already prescribed; and this consequence must especially extend to the distinctive qualities of the subjects appropriate for the execution of every art, since it is particularly in the choice of subjects that those errors and confusions of properties arise, by which each art is vainly supposed to be enriched.

In truth the artist very frequently impoverishes himself by his larcenies. It is impossible but that a subject which, well adapted to one art, would prove a source of fertility to genius in that art, should remain unfruitful when thus inadvisedly transferred to another.

Pygmalion, in the exstasies of love, sees his statue becoming gradually animated. The tint that suffuses itself over the marble already apprises the happy lover and the spectator, of the metamorphosis that is taking place. Here is a

subject to which painting alone can do justice, because, by means of graduated flesh tints, it can easily diffuse over the marble an appearance of life. Who would credit that sculpture, alike without colour and motion, has notwithstanding been employed on this subject,* as though the same thing could be represented on white marble. Nay more, a fact thus limited, and scarcely affording matter for a monologue, has been produced on the stage,† a permanent example of a choice of action the most improper, since there is neither interest, incident, nor catastrophe.

Among all the arts poetry is the one occupying the widest field. Nothing indeed wholly escapes the kind of universality it embraces. Yet even this art is subjected to restrictions through its medium of language, and those restrictions are, for the most part, the result of what we have termed moral impossibilities, that is, impossible to the internal sense. (See Chapter vi.) Now, thus considered, many subjects are denied to the poet's pen, that is, they are morally impossible. Language is often very insufficient for the description of objects and their qualities; and it is that insufficiency which sets a limit to the prerogatives of poetry. To pass that limit is, on the part of the poet, an encroachment on, and a violation of, the principle of imitation, which requires that *a thing* |

* A group by Falconet.

† By J. J. Rousseau.

be represented by some other which is but the image of it. If it is the property of an image to be incomplete, then the image afforded by poetry fails in that condition, when the poet, exceeding the measure of means at his command for the representing of certain qualities, of bodies more especially, by others analogous to them, aspires to means of direct description which he would seem desirous of wresting from the painter's art.

Lessing has, in his *Laocoon*,* unquestionably demonstrated that the poet is deceived who thinks himself able to represent corporeal objects by the, necessarily successive, detail of their parts, since it is precisely that very detail and succession of ideas that prevent parts so dissected and decomposed from producing on the mind an image of the whole, that is, of the aggregate of the thing to be conceived of.

It must, from this incontestible fact, be concluded, that the value which, in physical nature, is due to what is termed the aggregate of parts, (and of this kind more especially is that corporeal beauty of which the eye alone is judge,) is wanting only to poetical description, when, with its partial and disjointed traits, the materiality of objects is dealt with ; whence we may again infer that in such subjects the kind of imitation appro-

* A work so entitled, a translation of which has very recently appeared from the pen of "William Ross, Esq., late Professor of Painting in the University of Glasgow."—*Translator*.

priate to poetry is that embracing moral relations, details of sentiment, and the effects which exercise an influence over the mind, by the aid of analogies and transpositions, and by means of those similes, which, carrying us back to the elementary principles of imitation, cause us to see one thing in another. Such was the general taste of all antiquity.

Several modern poets have, notwithstanding, endeavoured to bring the opposite taste into vogue, by the introduction of what is termed the *descriptive* style.

One would expect that the erroneous belief of a community between poetry and painting, which has already obtained a footing through misapprehension of the relations between those two arts, would still further gain ground in consequence of the reciprocal influence of their works, an influence which has in our time become more active both as regards authors and artists.

I have before spoken of the predilection too frequently evinced by the painter towards the transfer to his canvass of the subjects of the dramatic poet as seen on the stage. And who will deny but that the author, becoming more familiarised with the works and effects of the pencil, may not contract a habit of the same sort, exhibiting a poetical anomaly almost unknown to antiquity, and in which, if one may so say, a new employment is created for poetry, under the title of *descriptive poetry*?

The poet smitten with this taste, chooses by preference, subjects within the province of matter, or, among the relations of the subject he treats, those which are calculated by their nature rather to awaken the senses than the sentiments.

A powerless rival of the painter, he affects to trace out his piecemeal images by the pattern of reality, to emulate the pencil in the multiplicity of its strokes, the brush in the variety of its tints, to furnish a whole by enumeration, and an aggregate of parts by their dissection ;—superfluous cares, prompted by an ill-placed covetousness, by which he loses what rightly belongs to him while striving after what he can never attain.

Is any one so blind as not to perceive that such mania, for it deserves no better name, is derived from the opinion entertained by some, that the means of one art may be added to those of another, and that it is possible to complete the measure of its imitative power, by borrowing in order to conceal its *deficit* of resemblance ?

Able writers had already contended against this false taste. They had shown that the true manner in which the poet should paint material objects, visible nature, and its physical effects, was neither by the frigid method of a detailed catalogue, nor by the process of the demonstrator, when analyzing the properties of matter, that, on the contrary, it consisted in the art of employing felicitous transpositions and of exchanging physical images for

the moral ideas corresponding to them, and which, exciting in us analogous and sympathetic emotions, bring our minds (as already remarked,) into correlation with the impression of the scenes of nature on our senses.

But that false taste has again arisen in our day under a more positive and more general form, no longer as an abuse of the details of style, but as a poetical system, and with pretensions to ~~being a new form of composition, an invention of modern times.~~

This new ~~form~~ of composition is called the *romantic*.

If an explanation of its name, that is, the signification of the word in its etymology be inquired, it is derived from the *roman* or old romance, a kind of tale so named from the *langue Romane* or *Romantsch* language, because it had its origin during the period that bastard idiom was in use; and hence also the word "*romanesque*" * perfectly similar, save a trifling variation in its termination, to the word *romantic* (*romantique*), which has been borrowed from the English or German, because *romanesque* had already a received acceptation but ill adapted, as it is maintained, to convey the idea of the new style of composition.

* The English language affords no parallel to the above word as distinguished from *romantique*; it signifies however *after the manner of romances*, as *picturesque*, in its strict sense, *after the manner of pictures*.—Translator.

It must, however, be confessed that the name given by our neighbours to a system of dramas, wherein the author takes as his model the unlimited action of a romance, expresses well enough that truly *romanesque*, or, so called, *romantic* style of composition.

But what would seem most difficult to comprehend is, how there could be a new way of seeing, hearing, thinking, and writing, in short, a new mode of composition requiring a new name to designate it, and yet that none could be found to ~~characterize it without conveying an equivocal meaning; for it appears doubtful, whether it be that the vagueness of the word is communicated~~ to the idea, or that the defect of the idea itself, and, more appropriately speaking, the pretended mode of composition, prevents the application of an intelligible name. In either case one may say with Boileau : *Ce que l'on conçoit bien s'énonce clairement*. There would be no room for disagreement as to the signification of the word *romantic*, nor any occasion given for every one to interpret it differently, were there not a great deal of obscurity, indecisiveness and confusion at the bottom of that idea, which is the case with all ideas formed in the cloudy region of imagination.

What can indeed be said of a manner which, in order to distinguish it, is placed in opposition to the *classic style*? for, however negative, that is the clearest definition of it. The romantic style is . . .

what? you will not be told what it is, but what it is not: it is the opposite of the classical. And what is the so called classical style? Nothing more nor less than that which has maintained its ascendancy during two or three thousand years, which has served as a model for all the nations of modern Europe, and in accordance with which every work hitherto admired by the world has been composed.

Many objections here naturally present themselves, which might be brought forward against this alleged discovery, but they would lead me too far from the question in hand. I will offer but two remarks: 1st. How has such a discovery hitherto escaped the penetration of so many ages and so many nations? 2nd. Is it not possible that a mere manner of viewing things, at once indirect and false, may have been taken for a discovery and a novelty; an error of the mind, countenanced through the love of change, and which a futile hankering after originality would fain have believed to be invested with the colours of genius?

When these questions are pushed home to the partizans of this new style, they defend it precisely by the very motives that ought to carry with them its condemnation. They declare that "it is a resource which, with a race of people that have grown old, (in civilization,) supplies, in poetry, the place of moral inspiration; that such

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resource is borrowed from *invariable physical nature*; * and that, in the case of a people so circumstanced, there is no longer any thing to describe, than nature which never grows old," that is, in the sense of the author, than *invariable physical nature*.

The proper scope of the romantic style of composition is then, according to the avowal of one of its observers, *descriptive* talent applied more at large to *physical nature*; and here this digression again falls in with the subject I am discussing and the object of the present chapter.

I have already explained, but it is here necessary to repeat it, in what manner true poetry deals with the description of material objects. As the arts of design, or those which speak to the eye, have most frequent need to transmute moral ideas into physical forms, so poetry, which paints to the mind, has to convert corporeal sensations into moral impressions. It portrays material objects rather by their effect on the mind, than their action on the senses, rather in their relation with the sentiments they give rise to, than in that of their visible configuration. Its secret more especially consists in bringing within the undefined pale of the understanding, which amplifies their image, those subjects which the art of design

* Charles Nodier's Preface to Trilby.

can present to us only within the confined limits of a determinate place.

Poetry and the so called romantic form of composition, have totally different ends in view. The writer, in his pictorial mania, seems to aspire to an immediate and almost graven copy of the objects of matter. He endeavours to fasten on their reality, as though it were possible for him to stamp them on the visual organ. As though the idea of painting, as applied to poetry, were not a mere fiction of language, he borrows the eye of the painter wherewith to consider nature, and, his imagination filled with forms, tints, accidents of light and shadow, and other physical effects, he believes the canvass to be before him, dreams that he has pencil and brushes in hand, and fancies that words and sentences are to make on his reader or hearer the impression that nature has appointed to the spectator. It is nothing less than mistaking one of our senses for another. Poetry, without doubt, has its pictures, but they are metaphorical ones; and as the eye is interdicted from seeing them, so the poet is forbidden to aspire to the employment of elements which have no other value than that derived from their visibility.

When Virgil portrays night, it is by its effects on living creatures. He makes no futile endeavour to rival the labours of the landscape painter.

At one time he shows us men, animals, the winds, and the waves of the sea, all hushed to sleep ;* at another he places the traveller in the midst of a gloomy forest, well nigh losing his way by the doubtful glimmering of the torch of night.†

Would we see the same subject treated in the spirit of the romantic style? for to see is almost the proper word, so great is the desire evinced to seize on those traits which are within the province of the sight. *The night will have wings of sable gauze. She will curtain the heavens with funereal crape, and the stars will be its gilded studs.* Elsewhere we shall be told that *little clouds, like airy flocks of down, hovered aloft, flitting across the disk of the silver moon; the mirror of the neighbouring lake will reflect its pale form, and the undulations occasioned by the evening breeze will furrow its tremulous surface.* Might one not be led to believe that the writer had undertaken, with a view to a demonstration in optics, to describe in detail a moonlight scene by Claude Lorraine? Is it the

* Nox erat, et placidum carpebant fessa soporem
Corpora per terras, sylvæque, et sæva quierant
Æquora: cùm medio volvuntur sidera lapsu:
Cùm tacet omnis ager; pecudes, pictæque volucres, &c.
ÆNEID, lib. iv. 522.

† Quale per incertam Lunam sub luce maligna
Est iter in sylvis: ubi cælum condidit umbra
Jupiter, et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem.

ÆNEID, lib. vi. 270.

Against the Poet imitating the painter

OF IMITATION.

99

painter thinking to translate his own work into writing, or the poet struck with a fancy to become a journeyman painter ?

One may say that, in the spurious form of composition above spoken of, the poet's muse has laid aside her ideal lyre, to take up the mechanical instruments of the arts of design. The author no longer draws his inspiration directly from the objects even of physical nature, but from the imitations and imitative processes of the artist. His picturesque is that of the pencil, his descriptions are formal, his metaphors technical. He lengthens bodies into obelisks, rounds them into domes, and hollows them into vases. He affects to model forms, trace contours, draw outlines, project shadows, and group masses. He colours flowers vermilion, and paints the heavens ultramarine. He drapes the mountains with snow, and puts them on a head-dress of frost ; while he spreads abroad the corrugated folds of sheets of water. He passes a glaze over the dawn, and demi-tints over twilight. Be assured he will not forget the vapours of the aërial perspective in the distance, nor the prominent objects in the foreground of his pictures, nor the moss or lichen on the trunks of trees, nor the greenish hue or mould on tombstones, nor the parasitical plant on the ruin, nor the embrowned hue of the tower, nor the play of light on its windows, nor the fluctua-

tions of the waves of the lake, nor the reflection of the poplar that is admiring itself in its crystal mirror.

It may with truth be alleged that the vocabulary of the art of painting is drained to exhaustion in paraphrasing pictures.

Not indeed that we have any intention of denying to poetry the expression of certain effects of external nature. What we would hold up to reprobation in this novel style is, that it affects images drawn from material objects, instead of those that may be derived from the sentiments, and moral associations, preferring the delineations, and if one may use the term, minute specifications of bodies, to the impressions of the mind, the limited relations of things visible, to the unlimited associations of the world of ideas ; it is the affectation of speaking to the senses in a language not their own, while refusing to the mind that which rightly belongs to it, and of abandoning resources affording the most direct action on the heart and the imagination, in order to wear out unavailingly and falsify the strings of an instrument, unmanageable to the hand that touches them, and unfitted to produce the effect required ; it is in short, the pulling down poetry from her high places, whence its genius bears sway over the moral and intellectual world, to struggle, with unequal weapons, on the ground of realities, with

arts whose property it is to express the forms and colours of bodies, and their end, while employing matter in their images, to elevate them to those very regions of the ideal which the poet would seem anxious to desert.

— But what about the other way round

CHAPTER X.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

SECOND ERROR OF THE ARTIST.

It consists in seeking truth short of the limits of every art, by a system of servile copy, which deprives the imitation or the image, of that fictitious part which constitutes at once its essence and its character.

SINCE *to imitate, is to produce the resemblance of a thing by some other that becomes the image of it*, it is evident that the imitation proper to the fine arts does, and can only admit of the appearance of things. Now, all appearance derived from art is more or less fictitious. The same may be said of the kind of *truth* belonging to the imitative resemblance. It is truth, but truth by means of fiction. (*Ex facto verum.*)

It has been seen how the artist desirous of achieving an entire resemblance, incompatible with a necessarily partial image, is led to covet resources foreign to, and beyond the bounds of, his own art, and which he has no power to render

appropriate to it. We shall now show, how an equally fallacious desire of attaining a misconceived truth, drives the imitator to the opposite extreme, and, restraining him within the natural limits of his art, causes him to resign a part of his advantages and means.

This other error of the artist no longer consists in the attempt to double or multiply the means of resemblance proper to his own art, by an improper superaddition of the means or imitative aspects of another ; on the contrary, contracting the circle of his privileges, neglecting both the nature of imitation, and the constituent character of the image, as well as the kind of resemblance that belongs to every fictitious work, he has no other aim, within his restricted horizon, than that of identifying his work with the individual model. He labours to bring it to such a point as to give it the semblance of being traced. He exchanges the charm attached to the fictitiousness of appearance, for the disenchantment of a false truth ; in short, the freedom of an imitation for the servileness of a copy.

Here then are two different errors arising from the same source, viz., a confusion of ideas on the elementary principle of imitation ; both however terminate in the same fault, that of *identity*, or the endeavour to attain its effect.

This latter error prevails as well in the arts of design as in those of poetry ; but it is, perhaps,

in poetry that it has been more openly evinced, that the greater efforts have been made to substitute the idea of servile reality in the image, for that of imitative resemblance.

Some persons have, in consequence, endeavoured entirely to deprive the art of the poet of those fictitious means, that are the necessary sources of its imitative action, and of the pleasure it procures. Some, on the one hand, have desired to lower its language to the level of prose, under the pretext that it is not natural to express oneself in cadence or metre. Others have contended against the employment of those conventional aids, whose effect is to modify, in a numerous class of subjects, that truth which is reality, and exchange it for poetic verisimilitude.

After banishing rhythm, metre, and rhyme from the language of poetry, they have written poems in prose, out of regard for what they denominate truth.

Others again have called in question the marvellous creations of heroic poetry, under pretence that they are contrary to the laws of physical nature, just as if there were not a nature of the imagination; as though this faculty were not a gift bestowed on man, that he might, by the aid of poetry, create a world of images rivalling reality.

They have attempted to banish from the stage those conventional fictions, without which dramatic imitation would no longer be separated or

distinct from the manner in which things in the ordinary course of this life have their positive existence. They have alleged that, nature being subjected to no sort of unity, either of time, action, or place in the events which occur on the world's stage, art ought to do as she does, and, in limited representations on the theatrical stage, proceed according to the example she sets us in her unlimited operations. Thus have plays been constructed on the model of a work of history, in as many acts as the historian would have made volumes; and we have seen acts of the due length of an entire piece, pieces divided into days, as the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, and finally plays become romances in dialogue.

Not only has the dramatic poet, in his regard for reality, or what some take for truth, conceived that he ought to accumulate incidents, and crowd into the space of a few hours, facts which a succession of years could alone develop; but, in order the more closely to identify his work with its alleged model, he has studied to bring all the details into view. Hence those pieces called of late years *melo-dramas*, in which, by continual shifting of scenes and decorations, every actual circumstance, that should have been intimated only by brief narration, is unfolded before you; you are compelled to be present at murders, catastrophes, and conflicts; in which every thing is addressed to the sight, and from which all

moral imitation is withdrawn to make room, by the exhibition of the vulgar passions, for identical resemblance ; so that such a drama is nothing more than a pantomimic ballet explained by words.

That other imitation of nature, which consists in making gesticulations speak, in the scenic action, by substituting the measured movements of the body for the articulate language of sounds, would seem, by way as it were of reprisal, to have been pushed even so far, through zeal for truth, as to give utterance to the pantomime, and words to the dancer.*

* Even so, and it affords a striking example of the direct negation of effect produced, when two arts, or two forms of the same art are mingled together in the false endeavour to attain a more complete resemblance or illusion.

While at Amsterdam during the last winter, I was present at the performance of a ballet, or an opera, call it as you will, though it was in fact neither, in which the performers, with the view of heightening the effect, were made, part of them to express themselves in the language of song, and part to employ the language of gesture ; but instead of enhancing the pleasure, the result was totally to destroy it. The rather, it gave rise to a ludicro-painful feeling, for it was almost impossible to divest oneself of the idea that the personages who spoke only by gesture, were unfortunates who had lost the gift of speech. Now the very contrary is the perfection of pantomime, which ought to be so conducted as that we should not perceive, or, at least, not have cause to complain, that the actors do not employ articulate language. We should be so carried along and interested in the action as not to perceive the defect or

More traces of this manner of considering imitation will be found in the musical compositions of the theatre, than may at first sight appear. Indeed the generality of persons take delight in such conceits as those, where the art itself is brought upon the scene, and is at once the subject and the object of the music ; I allude to those, so seeming, concerts, rehearsals, lessons in singing, and rival performances but too frequently produced on the stage. In them imitation may be said to be altogether identical. (See Chapter xv.) The employing certain instruments, as the drum in a warlike symphony, explosions of fire-arms to express a battle, artificial thunder to represent a storm, are evidently errors of the same class. So true is it, that too much noise to express noise, too much lamentation in the song to portray suffering, destroys the effect of imitation. The more the kind of subject approaches reality, the more requisite is it to respect the brief space that separates them.

To require from the action of the dumb-play what is expected from that of the song, and from the interest of the drama, what music is called upon to fulfil, is yet another error arising from a false idea of truth in the imitative resemblance proper to

deficit, in overcoming and supplying a substitute for which it is, that the triumph of the author and the actors consists.

M. Scribe was the author of the above mentioned, as of many other, non-descript anomalies. — *Translator.*

music. (See on, where the same subject is renewed.) Does the singer not err when he allows the modulations, or rather the erratic bursts of loose declamation to mingle with the rhythmical and measured words of the song, thereby breaking the charm of his art by a contrast that he takes for truth, whereas it is mere discord?

There are even certain actors who maintain that, in delivery, metre ought to be neglected, and verse wholly lost sight of. A proneness to seek for a natural, short of the nature of imitation, makes them regardless of all the nicer shades of simplicity: they abandon the simple for the familiar, and finally sink into vulgarity.

Such is the case in that dramatic system to which the unregulated genius of the English poet has afforded the support of his example; if indeed the name of system may be applied to a manner of imitating, arising from ignorant instinct, which nature will repudiate, so long as reason and taste shall be found in nature. It is very possible for genius to adopt a vicious form of composition, more especially if it find in its irregularity, that sort of independence which, favouring the soarings of thought, may sometimes assist its daring and originality. But the true genius of imitation, belonging to all ages, is genius submitting to nature, and ranging free, though shackled with the trammels of art.

Now can that style of dramatic composition be

so characterized, where every extreme is mingled in confusion, where the lowness of the language is contrasted with the eminence of the personages, and the vulgarity of the images with the refinement of the thoughts ; where, in order to appear natural, the tragic poet descends to the familiarity of the lowest comedy, and, in consecutive passages of the most opposite strains, suddenly sinks from the epic style to that of the mountebank ? *

The historic muse is not less exposed to the errors of this false zeal for truth. There is not a doubt but that the first duty of the historian is veracity, and fidelity to the facts that he relates. But the manner of representing them touches also, to a certain degree, upon the province of poetical imitation ; but to place the causes of events

* This severe censure of our divine bard has its share of justice. That Shakspeare, over and above the incongruities and injudicious minglings of low-lived scenes with others of the greatest pathos and power, was also wanting in some of the qualifications of a good play-wright is sufficiently made evident in Charles Lamb's criticisms, and accounts for the greater amount of pleasure we receive from Shakspeare's works when reading them in the closet, than when witnessing and hearing them on the stage. His character as a *poet* is perhaps enhanced by this latter deficiency, which detracts from his merit as a writer of plays for the stage. With regard, however, to both, and the first is by far the greatest fault, be it remembered that if they may be *tolerated* in Shakspeare, they are allowable to none, far less to those of inferior genius.—*Translator.*

in a clear light, to display all the varieties of character by well drawn portraits, and to give colour, life, and bustle to the narrative, is an art rivalling that of the poet and the painter. The right of the historian to make use of this kind of imitative talent has notwithstanding been disputed. Some have evinced a desire to prohibit the employment of those fictitious dialogues, which are a means of bringing the personages on the scene, and of developing, in somewhat of a dramatic manner, the secret springs of policy. In short, there have been those who have gone even so far as to maintain, that all art should be excluded from historical relations, which, say they, should be nothing more than mere chronicles and journals.

I shall say but little here of the arts of design, and that precisely because the matter for criticism on that point would prove too abundant, and because the second part of this theory will lead to the same kind of notions regarding them. It will be sufficient to advert to those deviations of taste which have prevailed at certain periods, and in certain schools, when the artist conceived that he was faithfully imitating nature, by reproducing, as in a mirror, the deformities which belonged only to the individual he had for his model, by reducing the works of imitation to a mere impress, a kind of *fac simile* destitute of beauty,

and deprived of every characteristic of true imitation.

It may further be remarked, how pervading is the influence of a false principle, and how, without any attention being paid to it, it is the means of corrupting little by little the works of an age or nation, owing both to the genius that produces and the taste that encourages them.

Is it possible that we can be mistaken in attributing to this true materialism, this purely sensual taste, the indifference evinced towards historical painting, which, above all other, should appeal to the mind, and the preference for a form of composition branded with disgrace by the ancients in the name they applied to it,* and which is become so dear to modern times, revelling as it does in the objects of vulgar nature, in all that is base and ignoble in the condition of society, and finding numbers of admirers, now that nothing more than material enjoyments for the senses are any longer required ?

Is not the effect of this principle betrayed in the predilection which has for a long time been evinced by our audiences, for the depicting, or rather the absolute reality of subjects produced from the very filth of the kennels, from the vilest wretches and miscreants that crowd our streets,

* Rhyparography. The depicting obscene and vulgar things.

and which are no longer brought forward on the stage with the mask of caricature, that might at least become the image of them, and assist comparison, but with so shameless and gross a reality; that there is no necessity to have actors to perform such pieces, and still less authors to compose them?

CHAPTER XI.

IN EVERY ART THERE MUST BE, WITH RESPECT TO TRUTH,
SOME *FICTION*, AND, WITH RESPECT TO RESEMBLANCE,
SOMETHING *INCOMPLETE*.

IF it be true that each of the fine arts can only comprehend a part of the great and universal model, and can only reproduce that portion corresponding with the means that are appropriate to it, by what is termed an image, one is compelled to acknowledge that the imitation granted by nature to every imitative mode, must necessarily remain incomplete as regards similarity, and fictitious in what appertains to truth.

These two facts, whose consequences are as important as they are numerous, cannot be impugned in any thing whatever relating to the function of the senses. As, for instance, the figure designed under one point of view, is evidently deficient in all the others under which the same figure might have been represented; it is in like manner fully as evident, with respect to the mind, that whatever qualities and properties are depen-

dent on the especial nature of the model, material, or instruments of any art, will be wanting to another whose model, material, and instruments are different. And this is what constitutes the *incompleteness* of every art in as far as resemblance is concerned.

✓ What constitutes the *fictitious* character of an art, is its inability to produce any other than an apparent and feigned impression of the imitable object, one which is opposed to that of the thing itself or of the absolute truth. Thus no one mistakes the nature of that fictitious truth which occasions us pleasure on seeing the bust of a person chiselled out of a bit of white marble or cast in bronze; on seeing an actor personate on the stage a very different being from himself; in hearing the poet compensate, by his artificial and measured language, for the freedom of actual speech; or the sounds of instruments, substituted for the effects of the real noise or articulation of the voice. All these are so many fictions that cannot be mistaken. Every one is compelled to admit their existence with respect to the material or mechanical part of all the fine arts, since they are so many facts attested by the external senses.

But to acknowledge that every art is, as a consequence of the physical laws of nature, limited to an incomplete and fictitious imitation, is to acknowledge, as contrary to nature, every borrowed means, by which one art might acquire, at the

expense of another, an increase of physical resemblance, or an excess of absolute truth.

We have before demonstrated, (see Chapter iv.) that whatever is indisputable according to the physical laws of imitation, cannot but hold good with respect to the moral ideas or intellectual qualities, which it is the office of the mind to judge of.

It remains then to show by virtue of the laws that govern the nature of moral imitation, that the means derived from it impose on every art the necessity of presenting to the mind none but *fictitious* and *incomplete* images.

Take for example the dramatic art; in what other is the necessity for that sort of *falsity*, that *fiction* which is the main support of verisimilitude on the stage, so clearly manifested to the taste and understanding?

What more appropriate name could be adopted for that altogether conventional arrangement to which the poet is bound to subordinate all his facts, all the incidents that form the ground-work of his subject, or, to use a preferable term, of his fable? What is that agreement which he would fain institute between the causes of the event that he modifies, and the effects he requires them to produce? What are those contrasted combinations of forms and features, with which his imagination clothes all the characters that he traces, in order to render them mutually more forcible and vivid?

What is that adjusting of the circumstances or personages which the poet effects for the express purpose of making his audience, by a more or less natural recital of the foregone circumstances, acquainted with the subject? What is that still more fictitious practice, the employment of explanatory prologues by the ancients, who aimed far less than is now the case at the reality of illusion? What are all these, but an aggregate of expedients, and means *fictitious* in the truest sense of the word? But this subject will be discussed more in detail, under the head of conventions. (Part III. Chapter iv.)

It is unnecessary to enter more at length into the proofs that go to establish the *incompleteness* of imitation in the dramatic art. It is well known that, limited in space and time, it is prohibited from unfolding all the circumstances attendant on any subject. To whatever degree, in whatever manner the poet may endeavour to exceed the bounds appointed by nature, and despite all the resources to be drawn from visibility in his images, language in his actors, and motion in his personages, his action will never be more than an abridgement of action, his aggregate than a fragment of a whole, nor his picture than a necessitated reduction of the original.

In narrative poetry, notwithstanding that its scope seems to be all comprehensive, invincible obstacles arise to render the effect of its images

incomplete, when, for instance, it is employed about material forms, the collective whole of bodies, or many properties of the visible world.

It is necessary to remark that the *fictious* is discoverable less in its language, in the measure or cadence of the words, than in the employment of forms of style foreign to the expression of common discourse, and the use of metaphors, the intervention of imaginary beings, the creation of certain characters, and of certain traits of moral physiognomy, whose original is everywhere, and is yet nowhere.

No art, considered with respect to its imitative power, or that of producing resemblance, affords evidence of images more *incomplete*, and the result of more *fictious* means, than music.

Where in fact does music's model exist? Whence do we derive it? Where is it permitted us to approach it so that we may compare it with its image? It may be that the model is itself but a fiction of the artist. However, be it what it may, every one is aware that music expresses sentiments or passions only by means of the inarticulate language of sounds, that is, by equivalents in every case very far short of the reality of speech. This art has never any thing determinate or definite in what it represents. It has no means of presenting to us in its images, traits so positive as to compel us to recognize them. Its secret lies in putting us in a way to see what it cannot

show us, and in influencing us to picture it to ourselves. In fact our imagination, as in the case of a text proposed for a theme, composes pictures of which music only furnishes the idea.

The magical power of music consists in its impelling us to endow the most indefinite conceptions with form, to mould its vague sketches into shape, to exchange its ideas for sensations, to translate its fugitive sounds into images, and by transpositions without number, to complete in us the effects of an imitation which owes its success as much perhaps to him who receives, as to that which produces them.

As it is inseparable from the nature of a theory, in which the ideas, though distinct, are approximate, that the same subject appear to be frequently renewed under similar points of view, I will the more willingly spare the reader, and refrain from applying the subject of this chapter to the graphic arts, since the two imitative conditions I am discussing are as easy to distinguish in what has reference to the mind, as in that which is amenable to the senses. Who can be ignorant of the bounds set to the moral properties, and physical instruments of the arts of design? Who, that the resemblances they produce are necessarily *incomplete*? I also deem it to be of no avail to show wherein the means of painting are *fictitious*, an art which has only a superficial extent to represent the effect of roundness and depth, fixed

lines to express motion, and which, restricted in action to a single instant of time, must represent what, so to speak, is already past, and what has not, as yet, come to pass.

There is nothing particular, on this point, as regards sculpture, which has not been already proposed elsewhere, or that does not merge into the notions peculiar to painting.

But many persons are instinctively and not unwillingly misled as to the two theoretical points now under consideration, in the opinion they form of the imitative value of the art of dancing, or pantomime. How, say they, can it be credited that there is anything wanting to absolute truth in an art which presents to us an imitation so near identity? What can there be here either fictitious or incomplete?

Happily for this art, they labour under an illusion. For if its resemblance were complete, and its truth devoid of fiction, it would cease to be an imitative art. There is no difficulty in pointing out where lies the error; it is, that either they forget, or are ignorant, that whatever is sensual or corporeal, beyond which so few look, in that art, is, as in other arts, notwithstanding the closeness of the image to the model, only an executive instrument, a means, fictitious in its very reality, of expressing ideas, producing immaterial images, and portraying the sentiments and affections of the mind, failing in which, they would be

mere feats of strength and agility. But I shall not stop to prove that the art must be *incomplete*, which uses gesture instead of words, and which is compelled to resort to motion itself to give the idea of repose, just as music can only represent silence by means of sound.

To disfranchise every art more or less from the conditions which its fictitious nature imposes on it, in order to give to its imitation what is deemed to be an increase of truth ;

To complete more or less what is wanting to the natural means of the imitation proper to every art, in order to render its resemblance more entire :

These two points are what ignorant innovators are continually aiming at, and endeavouring to attain. The efforts they employ, and their results, have been already made known. As it is against these their endeavours that our theory is directed, the sequel will afford many opportunities of contending against them.

It is sufficient, in this brief inquiry, to have proved to demonstration how erroneous, and indeed how utterly void, are those pretensions, to which, ignorance on the one hand, and want of talent on the other, continually lend their support.

CHAPTER XII.

IT IS THE FICTIOUS AND THE INCOMPLETE IN EVERY ART,
AND THESE ALONE, WHICH CONSTITUTE ART, AND BECOME
MOREOVER THE SOURCES OF THE PLEASURE OF IMITATION.

SINCE, by the laws of nature, an art can be nothing else than a manner of seizing and presenting a single aspect of the universal model, nothing can be more futile than any effort on the part of the artist to give to his image an additional truth, or an increase of resemblance elicited from a source beyond the sphere of its imitation. In whatever way he borrows, from whencesoever he may draw his resources, whether by an admixture of forms of composition, by a complication of means, by inclining to identical fidelity, or by all and every transfer of physical or moral qualities from the field of reality to that of imitation, the error is the same, and the result will be alike in all. The efficacy of imitation is destroyed precisely by what it were thus supposed would add to it, and in that case also the mixture of elements neutralizes them.

Of a truth, it is the *fictious* and *incomplete* in

every art that constitute it art. It is thence that it derives its principal force, and the effect of its action. And thence, too, proceeds its power of giving pleasure.

It is indeed on this two-fold *defect* that the condition of the pleasure we receive from imitation is dependent. That condition consists in the mind being apprised, and clearly perceiving that, though the scheme of seducing it may be entertained, the means of deceiving it are wanting, (see hereafter Chap. xiv. on *Illusion*,) and that what is presented to it, is truly a thing which is the image of some other. Then, nowise doubting but that the imitable object or subject is shown only in a single one of its aspects, it enjoys so much the more in proportion as, captivated by the art that concentrates it in that one point of view, it neither desires, nor thinks of suspecting there is any other.

Let the real be substituted more or less in place of the fictitious, by a near approach in the work of imitation to that physical or moral identity of which we have so often spoken; let the resemblance in every art be rendered absolutely complete by a superaddition of individual and vulgar truth, or by the combination of means appertaining to another imitative mode; let, for instance, all that art has clothed with poetical metaphor, be restored to precise language, and what will be the consequence? The disenchant-

ment of reality substituted for the charm of imitation. But it is argued that there will be the pleasure to be derived from nature. Even so; but art has nothing to do with such pleasure. It is not concerned about the pleasure experienced on viewing nature herself and in herself, but contrariwise, nature in her image. To enjoy nature, requires neither forms nor means of art. To disannul art, or, which is the same thing, the representative effect of its image, would be doing like the child, who, when breaking the mirror, in order to lay hold on his own reflected appearance, annihilated the one by destroying the other.

Such, then, is the result of that complement which foolish and ignorant persons would fain add to every imitative mode; and it is the same in all, save that it will be more palpable with regard to those, which, by material means, directly affect the external organs.

Let, for instance, the reality instead of the image of the objects be introduced in the scenery of the stage. Let me behold through a real opening at the extremity of the stage, the mountains of the country beyond, and the sea with vessels* floating on its waves, instead of the pictorial representation of a similar scene. Substitute, for the curtain and the side scenes, natural trees and solid columns and buildings; I know not what

* As at the theatre at Lisbon.

pleasure the display of such realities might afford me; but I am very certain that whatever pleasure I might experience, it would not be that which must result from imitation.

┌ Suppose that in the pantomimic fictions of battles, sieges, onsets or assaults, some real circumstance should change the combatants into actual antagonists . . . You exclaim, stop! for humanity revolts at it . . . And should not good taste equally revolt at appearances bordering so closely on the thing itself, which, by means of a coarse illusion, give too violent a shock to the senses? Such is in fact the case, when in the midst of the sacking and burning of towns, we see little puppets thrown down into the flames, and imitation so far belied through an excess of truth, as that those factitious tumbles are even accompanied by real cries, and that too when the sight is the only
└ organ that ought rightly to be addressed.

Errors are better understood, and more readily acknowledged when they are such that the external sense is a sufficient judge. No one therefore attempts to justify the spurious illusion of those painted statues which at a distance surprise the inattentive beholder. Every one knows that the effect of such imitative combination is null, inasmuch as it is not perceived, and perhaps it is still more so when it is found out. For it may well be said of it, *Tant qu'on ne le sait pas, ce n'est rien; dès qu'on le sait, c'est peu de chose.*

Nevertheless, the very same thing that is by common agreement censured in all those cases, as destroying, in regard to the sight, the very essence of imitation, by depriving it of its fictitious attributes, is committed and approved of towards the mind in those arts, and in those divisions of them, which are less in affinity with matter and with the senses.

And what other result do they attain, than that of diminishing and frequently disannulling the efficacy of their own imitation, who associate with it either an alien imitation, or a charm-dispelling reality, and who consider themselves warranted (as we have before seen) in introducing vulgar language into an heroic action, by an alliance of elements altogether incompatible; who mingle, with the sublime sentiments of the most affecting incidents, burlesque circumstances derived from the social condition of the lowest grades; who are desirous that every thing should be done and said, in poetry, and on the stage, as it actually takes place on the world's stage; who think that theatrical delivery should not differ from common conversation, nor theatrical action from familiar bearing; who, not knowing how to distinguish imitative truth from servile transcript, would wish that the fidelity of the pantographe, or the camera-obscura should be the measure of pictorial verisimilitude in the arts of design; who acknowledge no other resemblance than that of portraiture, no other

imitation of man, than that of a man; who, mistaken in their notions of imitative variety, (see Chap. vii.) set the pleasure it occasions to the account of the promiscuous commingling of different forms of composition; and finally, who believe they are rendering a service to art by removing the difficulty that attends the attainment of positive truth in images which are but fictitious, and the production of a complete resemblance by means fitted only to make it less perfect?

What result can possibly follow from all such endeavours; but that, while believing they are adding to the efficacy of art by augmenting the identity between the image and its model, they are more or less enfeebling the distinctness of that line of demarcation which ought to separate nature from imitation; and the consequence must be that both the truth of art and of nature will alike be absent.

To deliver art from the trammels which occasion the difficulty of its operations would be to dispense with the efforts it must make in order to appear not to need such exemption. To take away its subserviency would be to cut off from it the source of that resistance which is the cause of its strength. It would be just as though one were to free the dancer from the clog of keeping time, while the merit as well as the pleasure of the dance arises from the very circumstance that its action is subjected to that clog.

How strange is the ignorance, how singular the delusion evinced by that inability to discern what constitutes, throughout every form of composition, the merit and the pleasure of imitation! which merit and pleasure consist in producing resemblance, notwithstanding the dissimilarity, in giving the effect of the reality and of the object despite what is wanting in order to its being the real object; in appearing the thing itself, by means different and far distant from it; in the banishing even a suspicion of constraint while under the very yoke of rules, attaining the charm of ease in the midst of difficulties, producing an impression of the true with the elements of the false; giving life to what is but a shadow, and from the nonentity of fiction calling forth the wonder of existence.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHAT MANNER AND BY WHAT MEANS ART IS ENABLED TO CORRECT THE *FICTIOUS*, AND TO COMPENSATE THE *INCOMPLETE*, NECESSARILY INHERENT IN IT.

IN subjects like the present, too much attention cannot be paid in order to render one's meaning clear and intelligible. Gross errors border closely on subtle truths, and an almost imperceptible partition frequently separates the rational from the absurd.

We have now before us an instance where the true and the false appear to come in contact. Nothing more possible than that ignorance or inattention should mistake the sense of the words and make the thing expressed belie the idea, and the idea its expression.

In this way the most startling consequences might be drawn from what we have advanced on the nature of imitation, and the importance it is of to the arts that it should never cease to appear imitation; from the opinion we entertain (as will be developed in the following chapter,) that illusion,

as it is usually understood, is not the legitimate end of imitation, and finally that something *fictitious* and *incomplete* must form part of the character of every art.

Undoubtedly we do not mean that the artist ought to render that *deficiency*, inherent in every mode of imitation, still more evident than it is. We do not mean that art should make a parade, if we may so speak, of what is wanting to it; that, turning traitor to itself, it herald its own impotence, and put the mind on its guard against every kind of seduction.

If that were the only purpose of the artist, his task would be easy indeed. We know but too well how numerous are the means within the reach of every body for preserving the eye and the mind from every possible charm. Such art has small need of theory or precept.

A moment's consideration will suffice to decide that to draw such an inference would be a ridiculous exaggeration, not to say parody.

Not only should the artist be careful not to overstrain the degree of that kind of improbability, fiction and incompleteness, which is conditional to his art; but he must exert all his talent to palliate its result, and its effect on the senses or the mind.

I have already said that the merit and the charm of every art consists in pleasing; notwithstanding the hindrances that render success dif-

ficult. I am now about to show in what way all may succeed, and by what secret they may triumph over every opposing obstacle.

That secret is universally known, nor is there any other.

It is *perfection*; and this word requires no explanation, since it serves to characterise all the kinds of qualities and excellencies that can be combined in a work.

➤ Perfection it is that must compensate and that does in fact compensate, in the partial work of imitation, otherwise speaking, in the image, for all that nature denies to art in order to its being or appearing its equal.

That perfection, when it exists in a work, becomes an indemnity for what is wanting to every art. So great is the sufficiency of such indemnity, that we not only do not think of complaining of what is deficient, but we no longer perceive it, or, if we should chance to do so, it is but that we may applaud.

The hardness of the material of a fine statue and its black or white colour, is not only far from offending us, but if we advert to it, it proves an additional pleasure, and instead of complaining of the hardness of the stone, we are desirous that it should be the very hardest. In a master-piece of painting, the perfection of the harmony and the perspective, makes us forget its limited space and flat surface. Neither does the want of resem-

blance in singing strike us at the theatre if the singer excel, nor do the constraints of dramatic action force on us its subserviency, if perfection in the language of the passions is present to conceal from us all the expedients that the poet brings into play.

Each of the fine arts finds in the perfection of its own individual means, a corrective for the pretended imperfection of its nature, a compensation for what is necessarily fictitious, and a substitute for what is incomplete. But it must be confessed that genius alone can discover that substitute, and sentiment alone can enjoy it. Mediocrity finds it a shorter way to plunder what it cannot acquire, and ignorance, more easy to give itself up to the reality of gross and sensual emotions.

There can scarcely be an individual who has not at some time or other recognized this ascendancy of perfection, who has not unsuspectingly experienced its influence in some art or other, and has not had an opportunity of learning that such influence frequently derives its strength from that very impotence which the art has to conceal, from that difficulty which it must needs overcome. One advantage that poetry possesses over painting, is its very want of colours; its merit consists in not having need of them. Does not the contrivance in its pictures lie in their being rendered sensible, and one may even say visible, though without substance, form, or colouring? Is there

ground for complaint that the traits of the personages delineated by the great poets remain unknown and incomprehensible? Who is unacquainted with Achilles, Hector, Ulysses or Eneas? Who, in such pictures as the descriptions of battles, or of enchantments in the works of Tasso, has ever perceived the want of life or of reality? Who then doubts but that he has seen them?

Do we remark that there is matter in the master-pieces of sculpture? Do we wish for the addition of colour? Do we regret, in paintings, that their beautiful scenes are presented to us only on one side, or that their figures are motionless? What then would we have? In the painting of the fate of Heliodorus, do not the two ministers of heavenly vengeance fly, as they dart upon their victim? Do we not really pass round the Antiope of Correggio or the Venus of Titian? Are shrieks wanting to the torments of Laocoon, or the accents of lamentation to the anguish of Niobe? He who has never heard sounds from the chorus of the dream of Atys, has never seen aught but motion in the pantomimes of Noverre.

To what, therefore, are those arts indebted for their fascinations? Precisely to that deficiency which prevents them from deceiving us. They are owing to the very efforts they must make to supply what nature has denied them. How then should we repine at privations to which they owe

their riches, and an impotence which becomes the cause of their power?

To that fortunate impotence are we indebted for the prodigies of art.

The artist obliged continually to keep in view the weak side of his art, which, like the assailable point of a fortress requires so much the more care, puts all his means in requisition to point attention to the side where he is strongest, and this diversion he is enabled to bring about by virtue of that perfection, which can belong only to art. We shall indeed find that there is no art, however inferior in many respects to its model, that is not able to defy, nay, even to surpass it in some one. For each, from the very circumstance of its being imitation, may subject its works to combinations which cannot extend their influence to the operations of nature. Art, moreover, to excite an interest in its limited creation, places its reliance on a single point of view, while nature, amid the boundless extent of objects she includes, neglects the care of minute details that would be unavailable to her purpose. But this will elsewhere be further developed. (See Part II. Chap. vii.)

I have already said enough for my readers to comprehend, why the happiest results of imitation depend on a faithful adherence to its elementary principle, why art owes the only superiority its images can possess over reality, to their keeping within the bounds of their particular nature; why

it is precisely to what is *fictitious* and *incomplete* in his imitation that the artist is indebted for its efficacy; and finally, why he rises superior to his model, from the very cause that would be supposed to retain him beneath it.

But this also explains to us how and why tame works, in which the perfection of art is wanting, have, or at least appear to have, an effect so inferior to those of nature, and so slight an action on the mind and the senses, which has justly given occasion to say that *there is no degree between the mediocre and the bad*.

What but the coldness of its marble or the rigidity of matter, remains to that statue in which genius, sentiment, and skill have neither created the character, ennobled the expression, nor perfected the form? What, to those painted compositions of figures devoid of aim, and without truth of action, but the shock their immobility causes to the senses? Nothing is flatter to the eye than a picture, the lines of which are not flowing; nothing more mute than a pantomime, where the motions are expressive of no passions; more fruitless than a concert of sounds productive only of noise; nor more prosaic than verses which have nothing beyond the metre and the rhyme.

Imitative perfection, which every art may attain by its own proper means, is alone adequate to re-establish the equilibrium between the imitated and imitating object, between the original

and the image. Every other expedient derived from borrowed or stolen resources, not only aggravates the defect it disguises, but deprives art of the only compensation that can enable it to vie successfully with nature.

To counterfeit nature is not to imitate her. <
That fruitless pretension to identical similarity, which belies and foils itself, is worthy of no other name than that of *counterfeit*, *mimicry*, or *parody*. <
Reality, life, motion, are prerogatives of nature ; it is by means of those that she gives pleasure. The privilege of art is that it needs neither life nor reality in order to please, and that, like nature, it pleases, notwithstanding all that it falls short of being nature. Its privilege is, not to present reality, but to supply its place. <

CHAPTER XIV.

OF ILLUSION, IN THE WORKS OF IMITATION.

ALL that has been hitherto established concerning the nature of imitation, as to what it is, and what it is not; what some would fain have it, and what it ought never to become, applies so suitably to illusion that any particular discussion on the notion of it, might almost have been dispensed with. Perhaps, too, it may be difficult to avoid the repetition of some of the preceding considerations.

The word *illusion*, however, exists, and it is not synonymous with *imitation*; it certainly expresses a different idea as applied to our present subject. It is understood in several different ways. It is often proposed as the sole end of imitation and the works of art; and this has a tendency to diminish its true value. For supposing it well founded, it would still be necessary to be of one consent, as to the degree of illusion and the means of producing it. After what has

been already elicited there can be no doubt but that a corrupt illusion, the offspring of ignorance and error, may exist. The word itself, expressing that effect or quality of imitation, might easily give occasion for mistake as to its signification ; and yet mayhap it contains the best explanation of the idea that should accompany it.

The word *illusion* certainly carries with it the idea that the resemblances due to imitation deceive us. This would seem to warrant the conclusion that as we are fond of illusion, we are pleased at being deceived. Yet the elementary theory of imitation has placed it beyond a doubt, that, if the object to be imitated and its image are such as to admit of their being confounded the one with the other, the resulting confusion, in that it deprives us of the consciousness of imitation, disannuls both the effect and the pleasure of it. Whence again we may infer that, not wishing to be deceived, we ought not to wish for illusion.

Thus, on the one hand, deception would be the highest degree of imitation, and, on the other, its utter ruin. How are these contradictions to be reconciled ? How is such a problem to be solved ? I have already shown how. The word itself gives the solution in the idea of deception that attaches to it. If there are two kinds of deception, then also are there two kinds of illusion, and thence a source of ambiguity.

We all indeed are aware of the twofold sense

jurisprudence itself teaches us to observe as to the word *deceive*, taken differently according as the person deceived is judged to have been himself in fault, or the victim of a direct and external agent. The first case is that of an improvident and unskilful man, be it in war, politics, or business, who falls into certain snares that are considered as merely allowable devices, and harmless cunning, not as violations of right, or treacherous plots.

This subject may be more clearly explained by the instance of a game at cards. Every one will grant that the stratagems of the game are allowable modes of deceiving. But there are also unlawful means ; as when the player cheats. In the first case, where the deception takes place according to the rules of the game, that is, within the limits of given conditions by which it is mutually agreed that each party be empowered to deceive, the error that might be avoided is deemed the fault of him who has suffered himself to be deceived. In the second case, that of cheating, the error is unavoidable, since it is the result of fraudulent means, which are contrary to the nature of the game, and form no part of it.

I apply this to illusion, considering it as a game of imitation, and we shall see that there may be error on one side without either fraud or deception on the other.

In fact, every art, or every mode of imitation plays with us, if I may so speak, a sort of game,

having its rules and conditions which, if we would have them observed, we must ourselves submit to. In order that the game may be played, it is very necessary that the mind be attentive, and we shall find that what are termed the *conventions* of art are nothing more than the share of concession to which we bind ourselves, and in virtue of which, if art has no right to seek to deceive us, but after a certain manner, on a certain point, and by means agreed upon, neither must we require other effects than such as depend on those means, nor look at the forbidden point; in short, we must not look over our neighbour's cards.

Since this kind of game at deception by resemblance (that is, illusion) must, that it may take place, rest on certain artifices on the one hand, and certain concessions or compliances on the other, it is evident that two sorts of illusion may exist, the one deceiving in conformity to rules, the other disregarding them in order the better to deceive. But the first is plainly the only one that affords the mind true pleasure on this head,—the pleasure of the game.

In fact, the means for deceiving which characterize legitimate illusion, are such that we are forewarned to be on our guard against them, and prevent a surprise. We are half in the secret; and if the mind allows itself to be taken unawares, it hugs itself in its error, since, apprized of the snare, it might have avoided falling into it.

But the artifice by which deception is practised in unlawful illusion always misses its aim with respect to imitative pleasure. I would be understood to say that the more such illusion deceives, the less it pleases. If the imposture be unskilful, far from seducing, it disgusts ; instead of attracting, it repels. If the fraud be completely hidden, if by stratagems alien to the game, the deception be entire, the mind, nothing conscious, can have no suspicion of its error nor of the means that contrived it. Illusion, to him who does not suspect any artifice, is as though it were not.

It is then important to the success of illusion that > its effect be not infallible, and cannot be complete.

Therefore is it of moment that every art should be exercised only in its own proper means, which means are always insufficient to substitute the idea of reality for that of the image. This is as much as to say that it is the office of all art to attempt to deceive us notwithstanding all the obstacles that appear to hinder us from being deceived. From the circumstance of the difficulty arises the pleasure derived from seeing it overcome, and such exactly is the cause of the pleasure that illusion affords.

But such is not the cause of that pleasure which the generality of persons require of the fine arts and of imitation. It is scarcely to be wondered at ; for all are not alike capable of appreciating it. It will hold good as a general remark that,

according as the imagination is more active, we possess in a higher degree the necessary capability of supplying the kind of *deficit* common to every imitative mode; and the better also are we contented with the specific illusion apportioned to each art. In fact, the pleasure of illusion arises, more than we allow for, from a sort of working of the mind by which itself finishes the work of art.

The generality, on the contrary, bringing to bear only the external sense, and that but little cultivated in the exercise which such co-operation requires, desire not only a first impulse, but to be forced resistlessly along by the effects of arts. Coarse organizations require a reality in some measure palpable, and the nearer imitation approaches to it, the greater will be its success with the multitude.

Some there are who imagine that they add greatly to the effect of dramatic representations by relieving the mind altogether from the labour of supplying what may be wanting, in order to induce a sort of belief of reality. They think it a great matter to carry the observance of costume to the greatest exactitude, in the minute details of dresses, accessories, and localities. More especially as a thing of the utmost importance, they place great stress on the adroitness with which the mechanism of the scenes is conducted. There is, however, every reason to believe that no such feeling existed amongst the ancients with regard

to these points. Metastasio* seems to have demonstrated clearly enough, that with them the spectator had to exert himself, more than is supposed, in picturing the change of scenes which during the course of the performance were indicated to the mind rather than to the eye; which amounts to saying that there was much less illusion by reality, and much more by imagination.

It is indeed certain that the more exercise we afford to the senses the less room is there for exercising the mind.

What Metastasio has remarked upon the appliances of the scenic part of the theatre of the ancients, is equally applicable to the composition and recitation of their dramas. The poet neither thought that it was due to the spectator, nor did the spectator require of the poet that the representation should transfigure, like a faithful mirror, all that might be needful to induce a belief in the presence of reality. Very frequently the poet showed himself even during the course of the piece; and the actor also, often quitted his part and addressed himself to the audience; so that we may be warranted in believing that, in accordance with the spirit of art, they formerly understood dramatic imitation no otherwise than as that of a picture, in which the painter does not pretend to go so far as to deceive the senses, since if such

* Estratto dell' Arte Poetica, Chap. v., page 147.

were the effect of the illusion, that of art would disappear.

Considered under this point of view, the system of the theatre of the ancients, seems to have been more distinct from identity than any other kind of imitation. One cannot but conclude that the mode of recitation adopted, which was always in measured language and accompanied by musical instruments, would not enable one, so easily as with unfettered declamation, to resign oneself to that deception which might have the effect of leading one to suppose that what the actor said or did was improvised or spontaneous. In that, more evidently than in any other art, the thing imitated was shown, in and by means of some other which was the image of it: and, more than in aught else, nature was viewed only through the appearance and under the form of fiction. Which is as much as to say that illusion was what it ought always to be, an effect produced by art on the imagination, or the internal sense, by compelling it inwardly to represent the truth of objects notwithstanding all the fictitious resources and foreign accessories that might tend to a contrary result.

But such an effect could arise only from the truly moral power of art, which consisted in the poet giving to every circumstance in which the personages were concerned its local truth, to every passion its proper language, to every condition, to every age its habits, manners and mode of speech,

and lastly, in rendering the delivery and action conformable to all those gradations. Now the illusion, notwithstanding all that might appear to contradict it, would be more vivid according as the external sense had less part in it and as the art had experienced greater difficulties, and consequently the mind exercised more energy in overleaping the distance that separated the object imitated and the means of imitation: for, on that, as we shall presently show (see the next chapter) depends, far more than is supposed, the value and efficacy of imitation.

What is there to prevent our applying to the other arts the remarks above made concerning the stage, the acknowledged field of all illusions?

If it be true that every art can only present the image, instead of the real object, and is bound
➤ to produce that image in *matter* distinct from that of the object, we also are reciprocally bound, in judging, or which is the same thing, in enjoying imitation, to set up no other claim than that of
➤ seeing an image produced by means of *matter* foreign to that of its model. Here we have the principle of the game of illusion and these are the rules to be observed on both sides.

We have already seen (in the previous chapter) that one of the principal obligations on the side of art is to remedy the defect of its material, and to compensate the incompleteness of its resemblance by the imitative perfection proper to its means ;

that this perfection, when present in the image, exercises a charm over us that captivates the mind to such a degree as to hinder us from remarking in what the resemblance falls short of being complete.

But while on our side we require that every art should remain itself and by itself, we are willingly disposed to facilitate the means of a freer range of action under the constraints that fetter it. Hence what are termed the conventions of art. They consist in certain concessions which we accord to it, and conduce, if not to extend, at least to render more ductile the encircling chain by which it is girt around.

I shall cite a few of these conventions merely to give a more accurate notion of them. (The subject will be treated more at length in the Third Part. See Chap. iii.) Among the number of those on the stage are the prologues, introductory scenes, confidants, the *asides*, soliloquies, &c.; in painting, the right of the artist to substitute a part for the whole, to change the natural order of events, transpose ideas and transform persons.

Still farther concessions in the details are permitted to imitation. They are termed *licences*; and the word sufficiently indicates that they are only so many permissions granted to art for departing occasionally from the strictness of its rules, not in order to violate them, but the better to observe their spirit, being merely exceptions, the

object of which is to aid in the fulfilment of the conditions to which it is subjected.

But these facilities render yet more rigorous the obligation which is imposed upon it of overcoming, not eluding, the obstacle opposed to the illusion which it is its office to produce. For not only is it imperative that the obstacle exist, but it must still, even when genius has rendered it imperceptible to the sentiment, be evident to the reason and really cognizant to the senses. I must be certain of it and be able to perceive it. It is, if I may so speak, one of the stakes of the wager, and the cause of the pleasure which I shall experience from losing it.

If an actor by putting off his own, and investing himself, as it were, with the personality of another, makes me believe, for a moment, that I have seen a different individual, I enjoy my surprise ; but it is because I know that it is not the person I fancy I see, and because I am acquainted with the difficulty attendant on such a transformation. Too much reality in the resemblance, by means, for instance, of a mask, would weaken the kind of illusion I speak of, and would diminish its pleasure.

If a statue, although of marble or bronze, hard and motionless matter, has almost made me believe in the reality of its motion, and the softness of its flesh, my mind will the more readily cling to that error, in proportion as my sight gives notice

of the contrary. The better acquainted I am with the hardness and immobility of the material, the greater is the effect produced by the illusion of life and action. It is therefore necessary that I should know of a certainty that what I see is inert matter.

When the painter includes within a narrow compass a vast extent of space, when, on a flat surface, he bears me through the far-off regions of the infinite, and makes the air and light appear to circulate around forms devoid of relief, I find delight in abandoning myself to his illusions. But nevertheless I would not have the frame absent; I would wish to know that what I see is in fact but a piece of canvass, or a perfectly plane surface.

When the singer on the stage undertakes to substitute measured sounds for those of unrestricted declamation, let him beware of infringing the rules that subject his delivery to the perceptible constraint of rhythm and modulation; for the pleasure of illusion is owing to the obstacle those very ties present, and to their evident restraint, an illusion which arises from finding the true accents of nature in a language so far removed from the natural one.

Nor with respect to music must any of those means which are the visible and material agents of its execution, be withdrawn; neither must its instruments nor its orchestra be concealed. I

would have every thing of the kind within view, that I may experience the pleasure of losing sight of them. Let all those charm-dispelling instruments, that apprise me of the fiction and its artifice, remain. The art will consist in making me forget the artifice. The place and its narrow bounds matter little. The more my actual view is limited on all sides, the better will my spirit mount into the ideal regions, whither the magic harmony is capable of leading the way.

And I would inculcate the same to the poet. In like manner have I need to perceive the ties that bind him down, the galling rules that restrict him, and his subjection to all those *unities* that render it difficult for him to create illusion. At the theatre I desire that, triumphing over those obstacles, and the knowledge I have of them, he compel me, by the sole resources of an imitation limited in duration, space, and action, to see that which does not exist, and to believe the contrary to what I know.

What advantage would that art derive from seeking the inopportune aid of the resources of reality in order to seduce me; since it possesses the secret of that true enchantment which is able to exalt the sentiments, to command admiration, to open the fountains of sensibility, and pour forth the language of the passions? These are the means of illusion for the poet. True it is that genius alone can produce such illusion, and that

the senses merely are not sufficient for its reception ; since the eyes of the mind must co-operate. To them, therefore, ought the dramatic poet more especially to address himself, and the illusion he will thus achieve will be far more efficient than that of costumes and scenic decorations.

Not that I would wish to deprive dramatic representations of all those accessories that tend to attune the external with the internal sense. Undoubtedly I approve the additional aid of the means and effects of embellishment. But I confess that I should prefer those pieces whose success depended least on such resources. I prize the illusion arising from the true expression of sentiments and manners, above that from faithful adherence to costume. I estimate, above all, that depicting of characters and passions on the stage, which needs no assistance either from outward show or scenic effects. And if the proper end of illusion be to lift us out of ourselves, I had rather be borne away by the power of the poet, than the artifice of the machinist.

It is now evident, as I remarked in the outset, that the observations which comprehend the doctrine of imitation are for the most part applicable to the theory of illusion. In fact, illusion differs from it only in being its effect and, in the opinion of many, its end. But on this last point some explanation is requisite.

This will prove neither long nor difficult, now

that the nature of imitation, and the elements which constitute it, are rightly understood.

No, then; illusion is not the end of imitation, if by illusion is understood deception practised in one art by means of undue borrowings from others, or by mingling the elements of reality with those of imitation. Illusion is not the end of imitation, if by illusion is meant that which aspires to lead the senses captive, to surprise the outward organ, to substitute the idea of reality for the fiction of its image, and identical similarity for imitative resemblance.

But if the end of imitation be (as will be developed in the subsequent part) to present to the senses and the mind, through the intervention of the fine arts, images which, in all the different forms of imitation, shall furnish an aggregate of perfection and ideal beauty to which particular models afford no equal, it is certain that such images will exercise a sufficiently powerful action over our minds to produce on us the moral effect of illusion. This is the sense in which it must be taken, when considered as forming part of the effects of imitation, and co-operating towards what would seem to be its definitive aim.

Hence, the still more obvious conclusion that, in procuring legitimate illusion, the ways conducting to it and the end proposed are in direct opposition to such as are maintained and acted

up to, by some persons through ignorance, and by others, through inadvertence.

The error commonly arises from a belief that illusion is due only to our senses, and that its action depends solely on what is material or mechanical in that portion of resemblance devolving upon each art, and corresponding to one or other of our organs. It is in consequence of this opinion which is common to the generality of persons, that they are so prone to exceed or falsify the means of resemblance, with the intention of approximating it more nearly to reality or identity.

On the contrary, the property of illusion in the fine arts is not to make us see that reality, but imagine that we see it; not to show us what it is, but lead us to suppose its existence, and make us understand what is not told to us. This effect will, however, be looked for in vain if we have nothing to correspond to it, to wit, the faculty of perceiving and that of imagining.

Of a truth we ourselves render assistance in a greater degree than is supposed to the effect of an action which if not reciprocal, remains effete; and it is for us to aid the power of illusion on ourselves. For when art has produced in its resemblances the perfection which is to supply their insufficiency it yet remains for us, that is, for our imaginations, our sensibility, to realize the image, and render its attributes complete. Genius furnishes

the ground work, it is our part to work it out and transform it. That is the crowning and ultimate requisite. Illusion must be sought after, and produced by and for the internal sense. The true in art is not attained by mechanical means, which is only a secondary instrument, nor for the physical organ, which is only the intermediate agent of its effect. Suffice it to say, that it is a fallacy to believe that that effect can be achieved in any art solely by those means which are in relation with the senses.

Can any one, for instance, suppose that it is owing to any results of onomatopœia, to the adventitious effects of imitative harmony in a few verses, or to the minute details of the descriptive form of composition, that poetry is reputed to be the world of illusions? Is it indebted for its fascinations to a casual euphony or the presence of a few picturesque words? Or is it not rather to the moral sway it bears over our minds, producing in us at pleasure the immaterial images of all beings, exciting ideas of every physical or intellectual beauty, and arousing those impassioned emotions, by which we are transported into the presence of all those objects that it so well enables us to see without the aid of any reality?

Does it not in fact produce the greatest amount of illusion, because it is devoid of all reality, of all visibility in its images?

Do persons suppose that the efficacy and the

charm of illusion in music is owing to the circumstance of that art imitating speech by sounds, and noise by noisy effects? On the contrary, is it not rather due to the fact that, by the aid of sounds frequently so alien to the nature of what it expresses, and so far remote from the object it represents, it nevertheless produces within us the most vivid images, that, without the employment of matter, it causes us to create bodies, and without words, to understand discourse, that even words are only a motive or occasion for, and not a subject of, its conceptions? And hence (as a passing remark) the diversity of opinions on the alliance of music and singing with poems and words according to the greater or less degree of imaginative power brought to the enjoyment of that art. One holds that the musician should be but a translator, if I may so speak, of the words: another that the words should only be an interpreter of the music. The one has less, the other more imagination. The one requires illusion from reality, the other finds reality in illusion.

It would be going somewhat too far to refuse to art, be it which one it may, the share of illusion which it naturally derives from the accordance of its material, or of its imitative machinery, with that part of nature constituting its model. Undoubtedly it must be taken advantage of, if it were only on account of those whose only or whose strongest impressions are those of the

senses. Who can deny but that the actual roundness or the reality of relief in the art of the statuary, is one of the elements of the pleasure arising from the illusion that art is fitted to produce, that the colour of bodies, the gradation of tints, and the fading away of the distant perspective are in painting powerful means of seduction to the eye? But it must also be granted that harmony of compositions, lofty thoughts, the expression of the affections of the mind, beauty of forms, and ideal character, and many other qualities that go direct to the soul, dispute the exclusive effect of illusion with the impressions of the outward sense. What if it should be found that the senses, in the share they have in that pleasure, enjoy less that which the imitation of art offers as real, than that which is deficient to it in reality, and which genius is bound to provide in order to supply its place?

After having demolished the vulgar prejudice that would place the merit of illusion in the attainment of identical imitation, we are arrived at a corollary which, without what has gone before, might well seem a paradox. It is, that every art owes its illusion, that is to say, the effect and entire worth of the resemblances produced by imitation, precisely to the very circumstances that prevent its resemblances from being absolute and complete.

It is, that every art owes its illusion less to that

portion of reality which enters into the nature, and attaches to the material instruments of its imitation, than to what it substitutes for the entire reality which it is prohibited from producing.

It is, that every art owes its illusion much less to its action on the senses than to that it exercises over the mind.

That the more the senses are engaged by the action or the work of art, the more limited will be its illusion.

So that the merit and the pleasure, whether of imitation or of the illusion that accompanies it, are in the direct ratio of the separation or distance existing between the reality of the efficient model and the imitative means that art has at command to produce its image.

But it will be necessary to enter on a fresh disquisition in order to determine with still greater precision both the value of the terms, and the sense to which the abstract notion just enunciated should be restricted. (See the following chapter.)

We can simply
 the nearest antecedents
 to American Classicism
 compare them
 CHAPTER XV. *those of*

THE PLEASURE OF IMITATION IS PROPORTIONATE TO THE DISTANCE WHICH, IN EVERY ART OR IMITATIVE MODE, AND IN THE WORKS OF EACH, (SEPARATES THE ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL FROM THOSE OF THE IMAGE.)

It has been before remarked, that the more there is in an art or its works to occasion pleasure to the senses, the less will there be to give pleasure to the mind; and it has been shown, in the previous chapter, that the effect of illusion depending more especially on the moral power of imitation and on our own co-operation, the mind is less active in proportion as imitation approaches more nearly to identity, and the image is limited to the repetition of reality.

The subsequent chapter will bring to the support of this position a fact hitherto but little taken notice of, namely, the comparative scale of rank that general opinion assigns to the different arts, by reason of the enjoyments they procure. But, however, the thing is of itself proved by the mere analysis of the manner in which the mind enjoys the works of imitation.

Two sorts of operations necessarily form part of

the kind of labour without which the mind, remaining inert, experiences no pleasure; for, with respect to imitation, to be active, is to enjoy.

The first of those operations (already spoken of in Chap. i.) is that by which the mind judges concerning the resemblances that the arts present to it. Every such resemblance carries with it the idea of a model and of an image. The judgment that the mind forms between those two things, results from the juxtaposition it brings them into the one with the other, and consequently from the act of comparing. Since the mind derives pleasure from imitation, proof is afforded that it delights in making comparisons. *not a recreation*

We have already seen that the mind finds no pleasure in that surreptitious imitation which, *of no thing itself* being no other than a repetition of the thing to be imitated, re-becomes, as it were, the thing itself.

no comparison And it appears to us that the true reason of that want of pleasure is the state of inactivity in which the mind continues, unmoved by every, so deemed, work of imitation which gives no exercise to the faculty of comparison. *a mental process*

As a consequence of this observation, or rather indisputable fact, it must be true that every work of art, even without falling into material identity, but only conceived in its spirit, and executed in such a manner as not quite to reproduce the idea of the absolute reality of a particular model, presenting but few relations to be combined, and but

Combination

slight distances to be brought together, (will little exercise its faculty of comparing and procure the least possible amount of pleasure.)

Since it is the having a great number of relations to combine, and appositions to effect, that gives the greatest activity to that faculty of the mind which enjoys resemblances by the comparisons it draws,* it is certain that it will receive the greatest amount of pleasure from that work or that kind of imitation which shall afford to the art and to the mind, (occasion to institute the greatest number of parallels and on points the most widely removed)

That pleasure, or, if it be preferred, that labour of comparison, arises, in the enjoyment that every art furnishes to the mind, not only from the distance which separates the elements of the model from those of the image, but also from the multitude of appositions they involve. Now it is certain that in every imitative mode, according as either the matter of the image or the technical means of imitation partake more or less of the nature of the model, there will be a less or greater amount of diversities to embrace, of subjects for

* I beg to refer the reader, who may find any difficulty in the above, to what Locke says concerning comparison in book ii., chap. 25, of the "Essay Concerning Human Understanding." It is to designate that operation by which the mind brings together and sets by one another the things to be compared, that I have employed the word *apposition*.—*Transl.*

comparison or exercise, and consequently of pleasure for the mind.

The second operation that enters into its labours, as a principle of the pleasure it receives from imitation, is that, the secret of which has been already laid open in the preceding chapter on illusion. I speak of that action, so wholly peculiar to the imagination, in which, exalted by the perfection and beauty of the image, incomplete though its resemblance must necessarily be, (as previously shown,) the mind finds itself as it were compelled to consummate the effect, either by supplying what imitation has been obliged to omit, or seconding, by a sympathetic admiration, the fictitious power of the art, so that we become instruments for providing, at one time, thoughts to bodies, at another, a body and colour to what exists only in idea.

It is to this co-operation or to its effects that are applied all those metaphorical phrases serving to express the action by which we say we are raised beyond ourselves, transported into the presence of objects that have no existence, by which we assist at scenes that we do not see, turn around what is only on a flat surface, see what is motionless move, and in short, overleap on all sides the boundaries within which art has confined its image.

Those two operations which procure to the mind the true pleasure of imitation and also explain the cause of it, consist then on our side, the

one in bringing the image to, and setting it by its model, the other in completing or in rendering imperceptible what is wanting to the entireness of the resemblance. Thence we see why the degree of merit of every imitative mode and of the pleasure peculiar to every art, may be estimated by the distance or difference separating its imitative elements from the elements of that portion of nature which constitutes its model. *The distance between model & image*

Here again we revert to the elementary principle constituting the essence of imitation, according to the definition we have already given of it. Wherever we find identity or its spirit, wherever the model and the image are of a nature to be confounded, whether absolutely or from the effect of a proneness to seek in the extreme after an appearance of reality, there the twofold action of bringing together in order to compare, and of supplying, in order to consummate, either do not take place at all or take place but feebly. *Comparison & Consumption*

The investigation of the abstract nature of imitation, or in other words of the principle generating its effects, lays us under the necessity of verifying its consequences that we may be assured of its soundness, that is, may see whether cause and effect correspond. Now, pleasure being the definitive effect of imitation, we have been led to recognise comparison as the active means by which it is procured; but comparison necessarily requiring apposition, the idea of apposition compels ✓

us to admit that of distance as existing between the model and the manner of imitating by which its image is produced, between the elements of the object to be imitated and those of the object imitating.

Whatever vagueness may at first sight seem to attach to this proposition, will immediately vanish when we come to consider its converse, which is rendered evident in the following examples of certain cases, wherein the imitative distance disappears, and is reduced to nothing, without however the artist having transgressed the laws of imitation.

Suppose then, that the sculptor, who has a right to employ in the representation of bodies any kind of material, imitates the trunk of a tree in wood, a rock in stone, or a metallic instrument in bronze, neither in fact, nor as regards the sight, will there be any distance between the thing to be imitated and that imitating. Again, we shall find an extreme closeness between the original and the image, in some works of painting wrought in tapestry, where this art employs the same coloured woollen, or silk material to represent the silk, or woollen clothing of the personages, leaving as it were no distance between that part of the object which it imitates and its imitation. We have already (see Chap. x.) instanced a sufficient number of cases where, on the stage, the poet and the composer of music or ballets take for the

The distance is

Sculptor
be then
may
is
very
close

subject of their imitation, that imitation itself, representing the very representation of a piece, the supposed composition of the play, and the seeming rehearsal of the symphonies, the airs of the songs, and the steps of the dance.

My only purpose in citing these instances, within reach of all and more especially appertaining to the outward senses, is that I may more easily render intelligible the idea I attach, in a higher sphere of abstract theory, to the species of imitative distance existing between every kind of model and every kind of image, and to prove that the pleasure must be different in degree, according to the distance existing between the elements of the image and those of the model, and according to the number or difference of the appositions which the mind must bring about in order to institute comparisons.

But why may not what is said and rendered clearly intelligible, when speaking of distance, comparison, and apposition between the object to be imitated and the object imitating in the positive and material province of the imitative processes of every art, be said and equally well comprehended of each of the fine arts when considered in the properties, qualities, or fictitious means which establish a greater or less proximity between the model and the mode of imitation in each ?

If then, an opinion commonly received and not even requiring to be proved, has established a

certain order of precedence among all those arts, the degrees of which are found to be entirely in accordance with the scale of distances actually separating the imitative mode proper to each, from the reality of its model, are we not authorized in recognizing in that gradation a kind of fact, which may serve to confirm our theory concerning the nature of imitation and the degree of pleasure to be expected from it ?

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COMPARATIVE RANK ASSIGNED BY COMMON OPINION TO THE DIFFERENT ARTS, SEEMS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THIS THEORY, AND, IN TURN, CONFIRMS IT.

WHEN we speak of comparative rank in the fine arts, or of the precedence of one before another, it must not, in this theory, be understood of a superiority either in power of invention, difficulty of execution, or merit on the part of the artist, nor yet as of disputing about tastes, or arguing against the inclination that may prompt a person to like one mode of imitation better than another.

In the kind of estimate here made of the pleasure attached to the effects of every art, we do not mean what the generality understand by pleasure, that is, the enjoyment belonging to the senses ; we would be understood to speak of the moral action of imitation. Consequently the degree of pleasure which can alone determine the rank in question, must be the result of a standard at once moral and intellectual.

Furthermore, the subject of this chapter is limited to the recognition of a fact, which, if it

coincide with what has been advanced in the previous one, will tend still more to demonstrate what is the nature of imitation, by proving with greater clearness, that the amount of pleasure it procures is in proportion to the distance which separates the elements of an art, from those of its model.

It is generally allowed that poetry takes precedence of all the arts. A sort of universal consent assigns to it the first rank. Every one comprehends and feels that this mode of imitation is the least material of all, that it is farthest removed from sensible objects, and also that the manner of enjoying it, as well as its images, is that with which the senses have the least to do. There is nothing less material than the imitative instruments of poetry, namely, speech and the rhythmical and metrical arrangement of words. In respect of the objects of the visible world, one cannot conceive a greater distance between what it depicts, and its manner of depicting. This distance is the same with that which exists between the idea and the sight of a thing. Poetry only produces the image of objects, by abstract and indirect means, which can no otherwise render them visible to us than by compelling us to picture them to ourselves. It can only address itself to the internal sense, to that intellectual organ, on which its images have no hold but by reason of the activity they excite in it.

There is certainly no kind of imitation so far removed from actual reality, and so little susceptible of being confounded with its model, as that which, embracing the whole of nature, lays under contribution the visible and the invisible, and whose combinations are unlimited, both in space and duration, by any real state of comparison, boundary frame, or fixed admeasurement.

Poetical imitation then, by its distance from reality, and the variety of relations it embraces, being that which furnishes to the mind, in the exercise it creates for it, the greatest amount of appositions to bring about, and of completions to achieve, should rightly occupy, and, as confirmed by general opinion, does occupy what I term the first rank in the imitative scale of the fine arts.

If it be true that general feeling places music next after poetry in this scale, it is easy to perceive that such order is conformable to the rank our theory assigns to the different arts, according as their means of imitating, and their images, are more or less removed from reality, and the pleasure derived from them has greater need of the assistance of the sentiments and mental activity. Music, but for its physical impression on the ear, is certainly the art most fitted to contend for the first rank with poetry, owing to its power of creating, by combinations of sounds alone, images at once the most varied and the most immaterial.

Like poetry, it transports us into an ideal world, where the imagination, converting mere concatenations of song, concerts of instruments, and sonorous effects, into forms, bodies, and pictures, gives to its own creations the force of existence. Undoubtedly no art more imperatively requires that the action and emotions of the mind should co-operate with the intrinsic value of its images, and make up for whatever is vague and indefinite, either in that which serves for its model, or becomes the imitation of it. It is moreover worthy of notice, that it is to this art that men devoid of imagination or sensibility are most indifferent.

Custom is found to be in accordance with this theory by classing, next in succession, painting, which imitates bodies by the lineal appearance and colour of bodies ; and, immediately after it, sculpture, which in the representation of bodies, employs existent and real matter itself. It cannot be denied, that in the works of these arts, the model, and what becomes the image of it, are to a certain degree in actual contact. It is this property that draws down the willing admiration of low and vulgar prejudice, while, on the contrary, their true value and merit depend far less on the representation of corporeal forms by matter, than on the expression of whatever is most immaterial by corporeal forms ; they consist in representing the moral by the physical, in portraying intellectual ideas, and the affections of the

mind, by palpable forms ; finally in giving, not a body to thought, but thought to bodies.

Architecture, which does not imitate anything real or positive, is always classed in its due place on this imitative scale, its office being to employ matter, its forms, and the relations of their proportions, to express moral qualities, at least those that nature shadows forth in her works, and which produce in us the ideas, and their correlative emotions, of order, harmony, grandeur, wealth, unity, variety, durability, eternity, &c. ; in such a manner that the material of the art, which, with the generality of persons, is the object of a sensual admiration, may be only a means, employed by the artist, of leading our minds to intellectual enjoyments.

The arts of *dancing* and *pantomime* are classed by general opinion after those of design, and this rank, which is that assigned to them by our theory, is wholly consonant to their nature, since they, of all the arts, are most exclusively addressed to the outward senses, least directly to the mind, and whose imitation is the most strictly confined to reality.

It were needless to refer, respecting them, to the voice of prejudice, and the avidity of the multitude for this kind of imitation. The taste, or rather passion, we speak of, is sufficient witness against them. The fact of their obtaining priority in the order of sensual enjoyment, speaking of

imitation, ought at once to banish them to the lowest rank. We do not here allude to the voluptuous appetites or desires which some of the arts have the power of administering to. Such considerations are foreign to the nature, the merit, or the pleasure of imitation, properly so called, and the theory of art has no further concern with them, except in as far as morality may be endangered by lascivious pictures. The meaning of the word *sensual*,* as applied to imitation, serves to designate whatever the senses are called upon, either exclusively, or in great measure, to judge, when the image or the elements of which it is composed, trench more or less on the region of reality, or matter. <

In fact, there is no kind of imitation which is so closely, I will not say in contact with, but almost interwoven with reality, as that of the pantomimic art, in which the model, the image, and even the imitator, are confounded together. In the pantomimic ballet, for instance, the separation is very slight between the imitated and the imitator. The art is therein so little distinguished from the artist,

* Coleridge and Payne Knight make use of this word in a similar signification; it is therefore not only perfectly correct and expressive, but is duly authorized in our own language. Perhaps, however, the old word *sensuous* which Coleridge has proposed in its stead, would be preferable, as not implying that bad meaning which common usage attaches to *sensual*.

—*Translator*.

that he himself becomes the art. Substance is not merely represented by substance, but living beings by living beings. Life and motion are expressed by life and motion. Hence the mental pleasure is feeble in proportion as that of the senses is vivid ; and the action of comparison is less frequently exercised, because appositions become no longer possible from the absence of any but very slight separations. We may further remark in corroboration, that this form of art is that most in favour with the multitude, and with those who, in the fine arts, place above all other, the pleasure arising from illusion of the senses.

If, among the number of the fine arts it be allowable to cite one which it has not as yet been agreed upon to call an art of imitation, I allude to > landscape gardening, more especially in the irregular style, it is with a view to show that, in accordance with the spirit of this theory, it is of itself excluded from the imitative scale. In fact, > every element necessary to constitute imitation is absent from it. Even the idea of repetition is scarcely traceable. What pretends to be an image of nature is nothing more nor less than nature herself. The means of the art are reality. Every one knows that the merit of its works consists in obviating any suspicion of art. To constitute a perfect garden, according to the irregular system of landscape gardening, we must not have the > least suspicion that the grounds have been laid out

by art. What pleasure, (I mean pleasure of imitation,) can the mind experience, when it is in no wise apprised of the imitation it beholds? What do we enjoy in such a work? We shall be answered, nature. But the pleasure derived from nature is one thing, that from imitation another. The pleasure that a landscape painting occasions is other than that the landscape itself would afford in nature; what renders the pretended art of landscape gardening as little art as it is possible to be is, that it presents as much reality as possible. Now it cannot claim to be at once reality and imitation.

I would have it understood why I insist on the unimitative or rather anti-imitative character of this art of forming gardens. I have no wish to deny the gratifications it yields, or to dispute about the kind of skill it requires. Those two points go for nothing in investigating the nature of imitation. But I could find no example better adapted to render evident, by force of contrast, what imitation ought to be in order to constitute imitation, the kind of pleasure by which it must be recognized, and the error of those, who, with a perverted desire to render the image identical with its model, seek to exchange, as much as possible, the effect of resemblance for that of reality, and set the material *illusion* of the senses, above that more immaterial of the mind.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESULT OF THE PRECEDING FACTS AND NOTIONS LEADS TO
A KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE TRUE END OF
IMITATION.

IN bringing this first part to a close, I cannot avoid warning the reader anew against the erroneous construction to which the preceding chapter is liable. It is very important that the conclusion therein arrived at, which will form the groundwork of the ensuing Part, should leave no ambiguity in the mind.

As in treating of imitation I propose only to consider it abstractedly, that is, under a general and theoretical, and not a limited and practical point of view, the words I may employ should be understood only as in a sense related to the nature of an abstract theory, that is, one which generalizes ideas.

Thus it should be thoroughly understood that I here apply the word imitation theoretically in an active sense, or one signifying imitative power,

and not as meaning a work of art or the object imitated. I also employ, in a general sense, the word *model*, which, more especially in the language of the schools of art, is said of the individual thing or person imitated. It will, on the contrary, have been observed that, consistently with the spirit of this theory, I understand by *model*, that portion of the kingdom of nature, whether moral or physical, which exclusively constitutes the imitative province of a single art. A similar sense and a like general acceptation should be applied to that kind of distance between the model and its imitative process, the relative proportions of which for every art have been determined in the foregoing chapter. It must appear clearly enough that this intellectual distance is wholly different in kind from that which, for instance, is discoverable between a badly executed portrait and its original, and which is denominated want of resemblance.

Provided there existed the slightest wish to misapprehend the sense which, in this theory, is attached to the words in question, it were easy enough to draw the conclusion that, as the merit of a work of imitation consists in its non-resemblance, the merit of a representation of a man would be that it might be taken for the trunk of a tree.

Thus by applying one set of ideas to the consideration of those of another, by viewing a gene-

ralized in the light of a particular object, and neglecting the signification the author had attached to his terms and phrases, one would be liable to pervert the most simple theory by a series of blunders, to render its very perspicuity obscure, and deduce from it consequences the most absurd and ridiculous.

I trust then that he who may have followed out this theory concerning the nature of imitation, in its premises, its deductions, and its application, will clearly perceive that resemblance by means of identity or the repetition of reality by reality, is the antagonist principle of the pleasure of imitation, as well when that notion is taken in the absolute sense of error, as when it is applied to works conceived or executed in the spirit of this method ; and that, hence, a work produced on the above named principle, or in the spirit of it, will only be calculated to please the rude instinct, or will be incapable of affording any other pleasure than that which is limited to the senses.

Nor will it be less clear that the principle of resemblance by means of an image, which reproduces a thing in some other, heretofore established as an essential element of true imitation, must be that of a kind of pleasure opposed to the before named, seeing that we enjoy imitation so much the more, in proportion as the judgment and the understanding have more appositions to make, (that is, a greater amount of objects to bring to

and set by one another), and as those objects are farther removed from each other. <

Such being the case it must, as a necessary consequence, follow, alike from the elementary idea of imitation, from the facts that have been deduced from it relative to the properties of every art, and from the analysis of the mind in its mode of enjoying, that the artist should, in every form of composition, look far less to the material effects of that mechanical action, which is more especially addressed to the instinct or physical sense, than to the superior effect of that intellectual action, which extends the power of art far beyond the limits of its matter, and of physical impressions. ✓

Since it is acknowledged that each of these two modes of imitating has its particular amount of pleasure, and since we are compelled to admit that the pleasure increases or diminishes, both in the arts considered by themselves, and in every work of art, according to the greater or less distance separating the model from the process by which it is imitated, the elements of reality from those of the image, and the effect produced from the means or instruments by which it was produced ; it is necessary that, in every form of composition, the pleasure of the judgment and the understanding be preferred before that of the senses.

Pleasure then is to be regarded as the object |

and end of imitation. But we have seen that the value of this *pleasure* and its degree will be increased or diminished, according as the one or the other system of identical or of imitative resemblance is acted up to, according as the work, emanating more or less from the one principle or the other, shall be limited to pleasing the instinct, shall be restricted to the senses, or shall enter by the senses only in order to reach the mind ; according as the artist, contenting himself with an approximation to reality more or less actual, shall make that approximation the goal of his efforts, or shall only employ what is real in his model and material in his means, in order to raise himself to a loftier and more enlarged view of his model, and produce from it those generalized images, the relations of which the mind alone can discriminate, and whose impressions it alone can receive.

Finally, it seems to me, that this theory after having enabled us to discover in the very nature of imitation itself, the bond that connects all the fine arts by one common principle, still further discloses to us a common tendency in them all towards the same object, and leads us to the knowledge of what ought to be their true end.

P A R T II.

OF THE END OF IMITATION IN THE FINE ARTS.

Poeta tabulas cum cepit sibi,
Quærit quod nusquam est gentium, reperit tamen.

PLAUT. *Pseudol.*, Act 1. sc. 4.

CHAPTER I.

PLEASURE, THE OBJECT OF IMITATION.—OF THE TWO KINDS
OF PLEASURE IT AFFORDS.—WHICH OF THE TWO IS ITS END.

NATURE, in according the faculty of imitating to man, intended no doubt that it should first be subservient to his wants. To it is man indebted for the ability to form those incipient sounds, which by degrees he learns to modify, as his ear conveys to him the rudiments of language. By it all the arts that he sees performed become his own, and he appropriates the forms, motions, accents, and habits of all that has preceded him, to communi-

cate them in like manner to those who shall come after him in the career of life.

Nature having under every circumstance associated pleasure with wants, the faculty of imitating must consequently acquire new developments in an improved state of society. After having been exercised in fixing, by the imitative signs of objects, the ideas of those objects, it came to pass that lineaments thus roughly traced by and from necessity were invested with greater perfection. Finally, when casting off the fetters of symbolical images, writing had reached the point of representing ideas by abbreviated signs, or arbitrary strokes designating not the things themselves, but the sounds of the words expressing them, the art of repeating the forms of bodies was applied to another purpose, the principal object of which was to please.

All this is too well known to render it necessary that I should stop to point out the cradle of the arts of imitation, in the wants attendant on every kind of communication that by degrees society establishes among men.

Thus the pleasure of imitation succeeded every where to the want of imitation.

As pleasure sprang from want, so, under another state of things, it created in its turn new wants. To perpetuate the memory of benefactors or of benefits; to raise the mind to ideas of immortality by the sight of monuments; to embody and trea-

sure up in expressive language, moral opinions, and religious sentiments : these were indeed true wants among civilized people ; and to supply such would prove an end as advantageous to the imitation of the fine arts as to society.

This point of view, however, can never enter, either directly or necessarily, into a theory which has only to do with imitation in itself. It is with this theory, as with poetics, in which, without discussing the moral purpose of poetry, which ought to have a tendency to render men better, the end proposed is to show how, and of what, good poems are formed, and not how they may influence the manners of a people. In like manner here, having to make known what imitation, viewed theoretically in its *nature*, its *end*, and its *means*, ought to be, it would be irrelevant to join to those considerations, that of the moral action which the lessons contained in works of art exercise on public feelings and opinions.

The end we have assigned to imitation is that of pleasing. But it will be seen, that the kind of pleasure involved in that end is not denuded of all action on the moral nature of man.

The better to prosecute this second Part according to the conclusions arrived at in the first, we shall begin by recalling what has been already said : namely, that the imitation of the fine arts is capable of procuring more than one sort of plea-

sure, which admits of different degrees according as the senses are more or less concerned in it. In every art the pleasure of the senses necessarily proceeds from that component part which, as in man, may be termed its physical substance.

There is no one art, as already shown, that does not address itself more or less directly to some one of our external organs, and by some means or agency more or less dependent upon matter. The pleasure that the organ thus receives is indeed one of the ends of every art, since, if that pleasure did not exist, the action of the art itself would be as though it were not. But that such can be its true end, that is, the essential and definitive end of imitation, is one of the errors arising from ignorance and thoughtlessness: as well might it be maintained that the pleasure derived from eating and drinking is the aim or end of that want; while it is surely nothing more than a means of attaining another pleasure, that of health, strength, and the use of our faculties.

Undoubtedly the pleasure of the senses must accompany the action of imitation upon us, but after the same manner, that is, less as an end than a means, which nature has herself placed as an incentive to those appetites, that lead the way to the accomplishment of all her designs.

In like manner in the action of the fine arts, the charms of sensual enjoyment should only invite

and lead us on to enjoyments of a higher order. The senses do but perform the office of introduction. The generality, it is true, having no suspicion of any thing beyond the external impression, stop short at it, like one who should take the porch of the temple for the temple itself. But such miscalculation proves nothing save disregard or ignorance of the true value of the fine arts. For our own part, without denying that the pleasure of the senses may be one of the ends of imitation, we look upon it only as a prelude to another pleasure, constituting the definitive aim of the fine arts.

The analysis of the elements of imitation discloses to us three degrees of pleasure corresponding to different faculties of man.

The first is that of mere instinct, which, confined to matter, requires only in the image, the repetition of reality by reality, and which is alike deceived in what it requires, and in what it receives. This pleasure is necessarily excluded from the consideration of the theory we are discussing.

The second, limited to the impressions of the senses, though produced by legitimate means of art, stops short at the sensation derived from an imitation, technical rather than intellectual. In this, the choice of subjects, and the servile manner of representing them in the spirit of reality, reduces, as regards the mind, the distance that

separates the model from the image. (See Part I. Chap. iv.) In this kind of pleasure, as previously shown, the act of placing in apposition, and comparing, is rendered of none effect, and there is nothing for the imagination to regard beyond what the eye embraces.

The third sort of pleasure, though without excluding the preceding, is the true end of imitation. Seeing that it is derived from all that is most exalted in the sphere of imitable objects, and rarest and most excellent within the range of imitative power, this pleasure stands related to all that is most noble in ourselves, I mean, to the faculties which most distinguish man from other creatures, to the intellectual organs, so superior in their nature and action to those of the body.

The pleasure I speak of cannot exert its sway, but through the especial co-operation of those who experience it. Its impressions have no share in common with those of matter. It requires other eyes than those of the body to see, other ears to hear. The imitation that gives rise to this pleasure consists in relations which cannot influence the senses. The distance that separates its creations from their generating principle can be measured only by the understanding; and it requires far other sensibility than that of the nerves to experience the sentiment of beauty which is its effect.

The pleasure here assigned as the end of imitation is then far higher in degree than that termed *physical*, it is in short a *moral* pleasure.

I have before explained that the word *moral*, as applied to imitation, is not intended to signify any useful influence on morality or manners resulting from works of art, but is employed in an opposite sense to that attached to the words *physical*, *material*, *sensual*. A play may afford the finest examples of virtue, but presented in a system of low imitation so nearly approaching reality that its impression may be reduced to that of physical pleasure.

The subject of a painting may form a good moral lesson, and yet the mode of treating it occasion us no other kind of pleasure than that limited to the senses. Such, for instance, would be the case, in the representation of the fable of the labourer and his children trying to break the bundle of sticks. Suppose the scene be presented to us as the interior of a poor and rustic cottage, with the costume and portraits of its peasant inhabitants, and, if you will, let Teniers be the painter; the imitation of an incident in itself so moral, will in that case produce only the *physical* pleasure of imitation. Suppose now the same scene expressed by the historical painter, with all the nobility of character, beauty of form, variety of expressions and attitudes that the subject will

admit of, the mind will then enjoy the *moral* pleasure of imitation. Nay more, the same effect may even be produced in the representation of events stamped with a character of the greatest immorality. I shall be content to cite the massacre of the innocents of Raffaello.

Furthermore, in making use of the word *moral* to express the opposite idea to that of physical and material, I do so only until the development of this theory concerning the true end of imitation, has enabled me to substitute another word; the employment of which, however, not being as yet defined, would here perhaps be premature,*

* In further illustration of this subject, I here subjoin an extract from another work of our author's, entitled "The destination of Works of Art," a translation of which by Mr. Howard, R.A. appeared some years since.

"By this last phrase is not meant to insist that subjects for imitation ought to be nothing but moral representations of moral effects. To be useful in the manner alluded to, it will not be required that a picture should always represent a trait of heroism or of virtue; that a poem should always conceal under its allegories, precepts useful to conduct through life; that the features of a statue should be always those of a virtuous man, or that its composition should always commemorate a virtuous or beneficent action. The moral of which this theory is intended to afford an idea, signifies no more than the opposite of the material or sensual. Thus art and works of art are morally useful, when imitation, instead of aiming solely to please the senses, has, for its special purpose the elevation of thought, and the awakening of noble affection; when it is

and lastly that the aim of art should be moral utility.

such that the sight of the objects imitated inspire us with new ideas, and enlarge those we already possess. Moral imitation is that which procures us moral enjoyment, or the enjoyment which is the property of the mind.

“In this sense it may be truly said that the most ideal imitation is also the most moral.”—*Translator*.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE RIGHT UNDERSTANDING, ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF THIS THEORY, OF THE IDEA OF REALITY OR IDENTITY IN IMITATION, AND OF THAT OF THE PLEASURE RESULTING FROM IT.

IF, as seen in the first Part of this work, the employment of reality, considered either in itself or in the mechanical means of repetition that appertain to it, disannuls the effect of the imitation which is properly that of the fine arts, and is consequently contrary to its nature, one cannot disallow the consequences of a fact thus found to be invariable, that is, the analogies which are dependent on it.

Nothing in theory is more dependent on what is termed the nature of a thing, than what is termed its spirit. From its nature are derived the general laws of its being or constitution. Such, for instance, in the case of every country or people, is the character impressed on it by natural causes. The spirit of that people is a subsequent result of such character, and is depicted in their manners and opinions.

It is the same with the fine arts, the natural principle of imitation once discovered, what is termed its spirit will assuredly partake, in a more or less evident manner, of the nature of its principle. That is to say, the same ideas are, in the investigation of this secondary object, capable of the same applications, with no other difference than that which distinguishes the absolute laws of nature, from the less rigorous rules of taste.

Thus the ideas of *identity*, *reality* and *proximity*, which we have applied, in their simple and absolute sense, to all surreptitious imitation, in which *a thing is found reproduced by some other that is only the repetition of it*, we find, I say, that those ideas, though only in their figurative and relative meaning, are equally applicable to that kind of image, the spirit of which is to represent objects just as they are, without pretending to give rise to views or conceptions beyond: and the pleasure resulting from such imitation is that we term the pleasure of the senses.

This being understood, when, in the future course of our theory we employ the words *identical resemblance*, they must no longer be taken in the sense of repetition of reality by reality, but in that of an imitation which gives rise to the idea of it, which aspires to be only a kind of mirror or *fac simile* of things and objects. That is, those words and ideas should simply be taken in their spirit, and according to their conventional sense,

not according to the grammatical strictness of the terms.

Although, in what is gone before, arguments have been frequently drawn, as by virtue of a necessary link between the nature of imitation and its spirit, it would yet seem well to determine this point with still greater precision, in order to avoid the mistake of understanding the things in question in a too material sense.

For instance, I maintain that an action is represented according to the system of identity or in the spirit of reality, when the imitator, whether poet or painter, relates or reproduces its details and circumstances in such manner as that, though its material truth be recognizable, yet it is restricted to that simple character, without any thing that might lead the mind to perceive any relation with the moral causes of the event, the affections fitted to shed an interest over it, or the effects that would tend to give it importance.

But I prefer rather to limit my observations to the idea of portraiture, which I shall hereafter have occasion to bring forward as demonstrative, in an inverse sense, of what ought to be the end of imitation. (See the remarks on the effect of portraiture, in the next Chapter.)

In painting a portrait the artist aims at nothing more, than that a certain individual should be recognized in his image. To achieve this, he studies to repeat with extreme precision the par-

ticular features, nay, even the deformities, of his model. Thus the usual encomium on a portrait (*it is he himself*;) serves, in the best possible manner, to define that spirit of *identity, repetition, reality*, which is peculiar to this kind of image; those words thus understood, and not taken in their strict sense, are applicable, in general theory, either to imitation or its works, according as the pleasure derived from them is more or less founded on sensations that are more or less restricted to physical effects.

Not to lose sight of the comparison, there is assuredly no pleasure more limited than that which is usually the result of a portrait. If we abstract from it all the interest that individual and public feeling, or the talent of the artist clothes it with, we shall to a certainty find, that the mind and the imagination have but small share in such kind of imitation; and for this reason, because the appositions to be brought about are few in number, and the operation of the mind in comparing very slightly active.

From this instance, to which no one will find it difficult to add many others, we may conclude, that imitation, when exercised in the sphere most circumscribed by reality, then contributes most to that pleasure which we have termed the pleasure of the senses, which may truly be said to be the only one that the vulgar require of the arts, and moreover the only one they receive from them.

By vulgar, I would be understood to mean, as well all those whose minds have not been cultivated, or at least not on this subject, as those in whom the sensual part has obtained the mastery over the other faculties. Hence, we may explain the avidity with which the vulgar, of whom I have just spoken, hasten to seek every where and in every branch of art, impressions so closely bordering on those of reality, that scarcely any room is left for comparison.

It explains the preference awarded at certain periods to certain kinds of imitation, to a certain class of subjects, which are capable of affecting the senses alone, and to relish which needs neither imagination nor understanding.

And it also explains to us why, at those same periods, the kinds of imitation, of subjects, and of works, whose models and comparison are alike beyond the ken of the vulgar, are found to have been neglected.

We do not wish to infer from this, that the pleasure of the senses should be excluded from among the number of the pleasures of imitation. The previous chapter has sufficiently shown how and by what title it takes rank among them. We would only maintain that this species of pleasure, by its close approximation to the impressions of *reality* and *identity*, so directly contrary to the nature of imitation, is essentially qualified to divert it from its proper aim.

We come then to the conclusion that the imitation which only presents objects to us in the spirit of reality, is that by which the pleasure of the senses is produced, and that such pleasure cannot be the true end of the fine arts.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE SUPERIORITY, IN IMITATION, OF THE PLEASURE OF
THE MIND, OVER THAT ADDRESSED TO THE SENSES ALONE.

IN order to form a just estimate of what ought to be the end of imitation, that is, of the pleasure towards which it should incline, it will be necessary to render a further account of this pleasure, not in itself, but in its effects, I mean its useful effects.

It is already known what utility I speak of, and that neither political utility, nor that related to morality, can have any thing to do with this theory.

The useful effects of the pleasure of imitation consist in the knowledge, the sensations, the ideas, and the images we acquire through it; in other words, in that which increases the scope of our understanding, enriches our minds with new conceptions, and opens to our imaginations vistas without number, revealing prospects without a limit.

Now, I ask what the imitation that is limited to the senses, in the choice of its subjects and in its mode of representing them, I ask what are its useful effects, what its images can teach me, < restricted as they are to the gratification of the eye. I ask what they show me that I do not already know; what they put me in a condition to perceive over and above their model, what impressions depending on art they communicate to me; in short, what acquisition such kind of imitation can promise me or give me reason to hope for.

I shall be told that it gives me what nature, whose portraiture it is, gives me. I answer, no. It does not give it, precisely because it is only a portrait, and because a portrait is only a part of the resemblance of the natural object, and presents only a single aspect; because such an image, thus limited, and which cannot carry my imagination beyond the confines of reality, gives only the finite, instead of the infinite, to which the soul aspires.

There can be no doubt that what we should require of imitation in the fine arts, is that it satisfy the cravings of our minds after unlimited impressions, and ever renewed sensations, that is, inexhaustible in their effects as is nature in her combinations. Such is the enjoyment that we demand of art; and such cannot be that of an imitation whose sole property is to exhibit objects,

precisely as they are everywhere and at all times presented to us. This imitation is somewhat similar, if I may be forgiven the comparison, to that of a certain animal, whose instinct prompts him to repeat the motions and outward signs of the actions he witnesses, though without comprehending the reason or motive for them, and without suspecting the intelligent principle that actuates them.

Is this all that we are to expect from imitation? And shall we lavish our admiration on a result thus fruitless as regards the mind?

And yet what else can be said of a work of art which, limited to being a mirror only of the object, like a mirror, can in no wise, either add, curtail, correct, modify, perfect, or generalize, and which in truth, morally speaking, gives us nothing, since it but gives us the same thing a second time, and, according to the spirit of the principle of imitation, has a tendency to be, as little as possible, imitation?

We have already had occasion to remark (see Part I., Chap. iv.) in what estimation every system of imitation must be held, in which is alone repeated vulgar manners, trivial phrases, the common-places of every day language, scenes drawn from the lowest grades of society, or images presenting only the individuality of persons and bodies, as well as all representations which can be accounted no other than so many copies, the

types and proofs of which are matters of daily experience, instead of being true originals, either in the common or figurative sense of the word ; for that is no true original the model of which can anywhere be instanced.

Wherefore should I wish for a copy ? What need have I of the appearances of things whose reality I am wholly indifferent to ? What worth can I attach to the image, when I hold its model in contempt, more especially since there is nothing beyond to compensate for the absence of all those properties which nature denies it ?

Whatever amount of sensual pleasure may arise from such like productions, allowing that pleasure to be the end of imitation, is there any thing, I ask, to warrant me setting so high a value upon its works ? Can the end attained be worth the pains bestowed ? To whatever degree of excellence the execution of such labours may attain, can we do other than class their results as among those costly productions of industry, the frivolous inventions of luxury, destined to pamper the cravings of a curiosity yet more frivolous ?

I have surely no need to designate more clearly the works to which I would apply these considerations. The reader's mind will have adverted to the productions of a certain school of painting, as remarkable for precision, technical finish, and fidelity of tones, as for the insignificance of its

subjects, the meanness of its forms, expressions, and personages, and an absence of all invention. Without raising any question about the difficulty, the skill, or the merit of these images of plebeian nature, I shall rest contented with pointing out to observation, that class of persons to whom they are most pleasing. Present a picture of Teniers and one of Poussin to the vulgar multitude before mentioned; there can be no doubt as to which would obtain the preference.

It is requisite to make some distinction, on this point of criticism, respecting the greater or less estimation due to the works, in which art is limited to that local, partial, or individual truth, which I cannot allow to be the definitive aim of imitation. And first of all it is necessary to distinguish between the *kind* of imitation, and what is termed *style, taste, manner*, as applied to the work of imitation. Thus the Flemish pictures are of a *kind*, which, presenting to us the mechanism of art in its greatest perfection, have no pretension beyond that of speaking to the eye, without addressing aught to the mind. The pleasure these works afford is not the only one to be expected from imitation. But we can require nothing more from works which neither give promise of, nor are fitted to produce any thing more.

There are others which, though destined to a higher purpose, are, from the *taste* and *manner* in which they are conceived and executed, far from respond-

ing to it. I could cite instances in every period. But, that I may be the better understood, I will confine myself to those of the earliest ages of art, when it was not yet brought to perfection. In those works, despite the charm their want of affectation, and their simplicity invest them with, we nevertheless discover additional proof of the positions here maintained: namely, that what is too frequently taken for the end of imitation, is not so; since the pleasure arising from individual truth, only exists in the productions of that period, from the absence of what art had not then acquired the means of producing.

It needs but to complete the parallel, in order to prove to demonstration what we have just advanced. If those works, conceived and executed in the spirit of portraiture, (I speak of those of the fifteenth century,) be compared with the works of the sixteenth, (such as those of Michael Angelo, Rafaello, and their schools,) it will not be difficult to obtain a clear and distinct idea of the description of pleasure which I maintain ought to constitute the true end of imitation.

What are those paintings of the early stages of the renovation of art? Portraits, doubtless faithful ones, of the men of that period. Physiognomy, attitudes, attire, character, form, and expression, in all, the exact image of the personages then existing, after the manner that they really were, the fashion of the habiliments, costumes, and acces-

saries of the times. Well! those paintings had not, for contemporaries, and still have not, for us, (setting aside the interest imparted to them by antiquity,) any other value than that appertaining to the repetition of what one sees; they make no other impression than that of a portrait. Nothing more can be expected, and the most lively imagination would in vain seek for any other pleasure, from them. Even subjects of history, either ancient or drawn from a foreign country, personages to whatever age or nation they may be supposed to belong, when subjected to the same local costume, the same reality of portraiture, are insufficient to carry the spectator beyond this limited point of view, and, whatever useful lessons the artist may derive from them, such works leave us devoid of ideas, impressions, images, feelings and desires.

Pass we to the next century and the works of art when fully developed. What a different world do Rafaello and the grand masters of his time open up to us! How many ideas and images that would have been unknown to us, had not imitation attained its aim! What another kind of truth, and in what a different sphere is it revealed to the artist! By how new a manner of viewing nature is her realm enlarged! How much additional food for the imagination, how many new objects for the mind to observe and become acquainted with, and fruitful subjects for taste to criticise! What

an unfailing source of pleasures for the understanding and the sentiment ! In short, what creations, for the existence of which we are indebted to imitation, not that which is limited to showing us what is real, but that which, by the aid of what is, shows us what has no real existence !

I shall not stop to apply the same standard of criticism to all the fine arts, but shall content myself with indicating that the same result would attend it.

For, what works are they, of which the succession of years and ages has been as yet insufficient to search out all the merits, to number all the beauties, or to exhaust admiration ? What conceptions, whether epic or dramatic, are they, from which, with inexhaustible impressions, we receive pleasures ever new ? What productions of the chisel are those which we see again and again as though we had never seen them : because the mind finds in them wherewith to find on for ever ?

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CHAPTER IV.

WHAT IMITATION IT IS, WHOSE MODEL CANNOT BE SHOWN,
AND WHAT NAME IS GIVEN TO IT.

The poet, says Plautus, when he sets about composing, seeks what is nowhere, and yet finds it. What does Plautus mean by seeking, and finding what is nowhere?

The answer to this question, contains the element of our theory, concerning what is the *end* of imitation.

From all that has gone before, there can, I presume, be no question, that to please, and, consequently, to please as much as possible, is the goal to which imitation tends; and that the greatest pleasure cannot be that of the senses, but, on the contrary, that of the mind; in other words, that which the understanding or the imagination procures. Now, as already seen, that which constitutes the object of physical or sensual pleasure, is of a nature to be met with at all times, and in all places, by the organ of the

senses, and the instinct that guides it; while that which constitutes the object of moral or intellectual pleasure, can be neither sought for, nor found, but by that internal sense which is termed *genius*.

Every art has indeed a model, which the artist finds every where, and which he has not even the trouble of seeking after; this model is reality; and the mode of reproducing it, by a conformity more or less perceptible, is sufficiently known. For the copyist there is the *reality* of actions, in the representation of which he follows, without any modification either, for instance, what history relates concerning them, or what he himself has witnessed, and exactly in the same manner that it occurred. There is the *reality* of discourse, the imitation of which consists in servilely copying the common forms of familiar language. The *reality* of manners and character, the type and imprint of which may be repeated without any of those changes fitted to set them forth in a better light. The *reality* of persons and physiognomy, of which the art of portrait painting affords a sufficiently correct idea. In short, there are as many species of *realities*, as there are species of imitable objects in every form of composition in art. Thus, in painting, there is the *reality* of situation, and of points of sight, that of costume, forms, expression, &c. But I have said more than enough to render myself understood.

It has been sufficiently proved (see Chap. ii.)

that the pleasure proceeding from that sort of imitation which is confined to the spirit of reality, is universally the most feeble.

It would seem therefore that such was not the pleasure that Plautus was desirous of providing for his hearers ; for he might have found the subject of it everywhere. Now he sought after one, the subject and object of which were nowhere.

What is this but to say, that in composing his dramatic pieces, he took for his model, an action the elements and details of which, though imbued with verisimilitude, could nowhere be found combined in a true and real event ; that is, he placed in the mouth of his actors, language conformable to their conventional situation, for the truth of which language he was indebted to no one, but to general observation on the language expressive of the affections of the mind : he brought into play and placed in contrast, throughout the unravelling of his plot, characters whose physiognomy was not that of any individual ; and in short, gave life to personages whom every one thought they could recognise, and yet of whom no one could in reality show the original, an original unknown even to the poet himself.

The poet had then good reason to say that he sought what nowhere existed. The same may be said of every invention, and it is perhaps the best distinction that can be made, between the words

invent and *find*. What exists may be found. That only can be invented which does not exist.]

It would scarcely be judicious to found any argument of importance on this synonymous distinction, since it rests on a point of taste, respecting which unanimity cannot be expected except between persons of a similar bias. Although it may be objected that to *invent*, signifying in its simple sense the same as to *find*, the object of search must, from very necessity, be somewhere, I do not the less persist in maintaining, that in rendering an account of the thing sought by the poet, one may still allow the strictness of their literal meaning to his words.

In fact, what he seeks, is an action where every thing concurs towards one end, in which are mingled interests and dialogues conformable to the subject, in which the personages are placed in situations fitted to excite curiosity, the characters exhibited in contrasts that render them efficient, and all the circumstances and incidents so mingled together without being confounded, as to maintain variety, and produce that unity of impression which was the effect he had proposed to attain.

This is that whole, that aggregate of incidents, that harmonizing concord of relations, which nature will never present to him, of which he will in vain look to her for a complete and altogether

real model, and which nowhere exists. Yet this it is that he finds. *Quod nusquam est gentium, reperit tamen.*

Nor is what he thus finds one of those fantastical creations, the fruits of an undisciplined imagination, which are fitly ranked in the class of dreams or monstrosities. What he finds, not only does not exceed the laws of nature, but is, on the contrary, its very spirit and epitome : since what is commonly taken for nature, is very far from answering to the name, seeing that we should understand by it, not all that is as it is, but what ever is as it might or ought to be. There are so many things in nature, as we shall further show hereafter, existing as exceptions to her general laws, that we are compelled to acknowledge, that all she produces in detail, is not always the faithful and entire expression of her will ; so that, as regards imitation, the study of nature does not consist so much in the special investigation of an individual and barren reality, as in the observation of the fertile principles of an ideal and generalized model.

It is here necessary to anticipate what will be found in the sequel (see Chap. vi.), by remarking, that what the artist ought to search after, he can only find in that general model which, in truth, is nowhere, in as much as it is general. What is individual and particular may be everywhere found, and may always be evidenced to the senses ;

but that which is *universal* and *general*, can only be grasped by thought or the action of the mind.

This *general*, as regards imitation, can only be defined by the understanding, and genius alone can imitate it.

Here then we have the key to the enigma of Plautus ; which is, that, in every art, whatever comes within the scope of the understanding, of sentiment, and of genius, does not really exist any where, has neither substance nor place, and is subjected to no one of the senses ; while he who finds it is unable to point out where he has seen the model of it.

That which genius finds, named invention, it displays to us ready found in its works, but it cannot teach us how to discover it ourselves ; else might genius teach it to itself. All we can do is to conjecture its course, by spying out its steps, and by founding on the analysis of its effects, the systematic theory of imitation.

For, be it remarked that whatever the poet may tell us concerning the mysterious operation of his mind in its inventions, every other artist will either tell us the same himself, or will teach it us by the works of his genius.

If we ask of Phidias where he found the grand conception and sublime character of his Jupiter, he will alike reply *nowhere*. For, he will say, what model is included in the two verses of <

Homer ? And if it was or is there, why have not others, before and since Phidias, seen it there ?

Zeuxis, having made his Helen a complete beauty, we are told that five of the most beautiful women in the city were provided for him. What, if we admit the fact, one of those models the less, or all, or any others in their stead, and would not Helen still have been a finished work ? And why have so many other painters before and since Zeuxis, been unable, with the same means, to attain the same beauty ? We shall be told that they had not the same genius. What then is a model in reality, if genius be still necessary in order to imitate it ? Who shall tell us whether it is the model that causes genius to see the image of the beauty, or that genius sees its own idea in the model ?

Well then, that which the genius of the artist seeks for and finds, is nowhere. If you would have proof of this in a fact that cannot be controverted : take, for instance, in the imitation of the human body, any model you please. Have the most exact copy taken of it by all the designers in the world. Lo ! you will find as many different copies as there are copyists. A certain proof that besides the local and individual model contemplated by all alike, each one has within himself another, which he consults and imitates.

After all then, what is it that is sought after and is found, although it nowhere exists?

It may be, that it is a something whose existence is only immaterial. It may be that it is nothing more than that idea of the true, the beautiful, the befitting, and the perfect, the elements of which nature undoubtedly furnishes for the imitator, but which she cannot present to him realized, as a complete type for imitation, because nature, as we shall hereafter repeat, has made nothing with a view to imitation.

It may be that it is, in every kind of imitation, but the image of a whole, the elements of which genius discovers, combines, arranges, and perfects by study, skill, and observation, according to the purport, and in furtherance of, imitation; that is, with the design of bringing the work to such a degree of generalized perfection on some one point, as to enable it to challenge the individual model in nature.

By one mode then nature is partially imitated, from a model which is every where. Of such the sole result is the pleasure the senses experience from resemblances which are not elevated above the reality of objects. This kind of imitation is that, which to judge, gives the mind the least possible labour, which leaves the imagination idle, in which sentiment has little share, reason little employ, and which has for its admirers, the vulgar

and the greater number of those in whom the outward organ alone receives the impressions of the arts.

By another mode nature is imitated generally, that is, from a model which is neither local nor individual, which cannot be arrested in any determinate place, nor, wholly, in any distinct object, because it resides in the higher and invisible region of principles, of causes, and of that intelligent reason, the true source of all the effects which possess any active influence on the faculties of our minds.

It is this imitation, the works of which are not the images of any object that can be called real, since it is formed by the study of the artist, and is manifested in his productions, by the aid of an aggregate of ideas, forms, relations, and perfections, that no reality could furnish united in a single being, — a single subject.

Finally, it is this imitation which is conceived only in idea, and which is termed *ideal*.

Thus it would seem that so reciprocal an accordance is established between the notions already developed, and those which will accrue as consequences from them, that they may serve respectively as proofs the one of the other. If, on the one hand, the corollary drawn from the theory on the nature of imitation, (viz., that the pleasure it affords is in the ratio of the distance that separates it from reality,) leads us to regard the ideal

as necessarily producing the highest degree of pleasure, and thence, as being the definitive end of imitation, on the other, the superiority we shall be compelled to acknowledge in the pleasure derived from the ideal image, will confirm the truth of the foregoing corollary.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE IDEAL.—DEFINITION OF THE WORD.—OF THE MEAN-
ING TO BE ATTACHED TO IT.

THE word *idea* is frequently understood and interpreted in a manner as insufficient as it is erroneous, more especially in applying it to the arts of corporeal imitation, that is, to those whose model belongs in part, and would seem in some to belong wholly, to the province of matter.

The word *ideal* being formed from the word *idea*, which doubtless expresses whatever is least material, persons are apt to imagine that it ought never to be found associated with words designating either bodies, or their images: as though the imitation of bodies embraced none but material relations; as though the properties and qualities of those bodies were not connected on several points with the order of moral and intellectual things; and as though their impressions could, from their nature, be addressed to none but the external sense.

The different acceptations of the word *ideal* have not failed to carry some confusion into this subject. The word is in fact sometimes taken in the sense of *imaginary, chimerical*; and since, as every one knows, the name ideal is applied in every kind of imitation, to productions invented by whim and fancy, the vagaries of a fantastical imagination, the name to many appears synonymous with whatever is false and contrary to nature.

Owing to a strange inconsequence, those even who reject the notion of the ideal from the theory of the arts of design, make no difficulty in associating this word with the notion of the beautiful or of beauty. Thus every one agrees in saying ideal beauty (*le beau idéal*). Yet if ideal ought rightly to signify something contrary to or out of nature, the beauty so called would then be neither true nor natural, which no one surely would understand by it, or would wish to have understood. But, if any thing conformable to nature and truth may be allowed to be called ideal, I would ask why beauty alone should have that privilege. (See the close of this Chapter.)

It is clear that there is some misapprehension in all this.

Etymology, though pointing out the formation of words, does not always afford a key to their true signification: yet, when a word carries with it in so evident a manner, the impress of the primitive type, it were difficult to be mistaken as to

its proper meaning, or the notion it is intended to express.

Properly speaking, *ideal* is not a word formed from another. It is the adjective of *idea*. The manner, therefore, of understanding the substantive, will furnish that of explaining the adjective. *Idea* being derived from the Latin *idea*, and from the Greek εἶδος, would signify no other than *image*. These two words mutually express one another, and often indistinctly, the notions of the things imprinted on our minds (for it was necessary to borrow from matter wherewith to express an operation the most immaterial). The words *idea* and *image* being synonymous, some metaphysicians have proposed to determine their variation, by applying the word *idea* to notions of intellectual objects, and the word *image* to those of corporeal objects. But this distinction would apply only to the objects of the notions, and not to the faculty of receiving them.

Ideal then is an adjective serving to designate and characterize, either notions existing in the mind or understanding, or works which would seem to be more especially connected either with the operation of the mind, or the employment of intellectual means fitted to give rise to impressions other than those of the physical senses.

In whatever manner the formation of ideas is explained, (and I confess I have no wish even to touch upon this question be it ever so slightly,)

all are agreed, that the mind of every one receives from every object, and from every kind of objects, or relations of objects, notions, or what are termed ideas, differing widely according to the moral faculties of individuals, and it is also agreed, that, according to the difference of the physical faculties, the impression on the senses produces on the mind of each, very different images from the same object, or the same kind either of objects or relations.

We recognize, therefore, two different principles of action in the formation of ideas: one of the mind, and the other of the senses.

We also recognize both by reason and experience, that some men receive the impressions of objects in a different manner from others, receiving them more or less forcibly or energetically, transiently or superficially; and that those impressions give occasion in some, more than in others, to numerous appositions* — varied, simple, and compound, the source of those combinations to which different names are appropriated, according to the particular class and nature of the works resulting from them.

No one can refuse to acknowledge that the

* I should not be doing justice to the author, did I not again call attention to the signification of this word, as before explained to mean that preliminary process to comparison, to designate which, as far as I am aware, no word has hitherto been set apart in the English language.—*Translator.*

same object, be its nature moral or physical, will be viewed, according to the measure of the faculties of each, by one under a limited point of view, by another under an extended aspect and the most varied relations. Supposing the same fact to be witnessed and related by two persons of different degrees of intelligence, it is scarcely possible to conceive the difference between the two narrations. And this because the person of limited understanding sees in the action, nothing more than what is matter-of-fact, while the other seizes, in the circumstances of the case, and in the apposition of effects with their causes, that which attracts the mind, which excites curiosity, and sustains the interest. Truth will belong to both recitals. But the truth of the one, limited to the outward form of the action, will be barren; that of the other fertile in impressions as the source from which it emanated.

This shows us the difference between those works in which the principle of action of the judgment and understanding is predominant, and those where it is wanting; and the works in their turn enable us by their effects, to comprehend the difference between the two ways of receiving the impressions of things, and the two faculties of producing their images.

It is natural enough that a work emanating from the faculty of receiving a great number of ideas, and of working them out under the most

numerous and the most extended relations, that such work, when placed in opposition to that proceeding from the faculty limited to the mere reality of things, should have been called by a name which is expressive of the elements of which it is composed, namely, ideas or images notably so called. For though, strictly speaking, there is *idea* in every work of art, yet we say a work is without idea, and the artist consequently destitute of ideas, when it produces impressions which are feeble, common-place, and confined within a very narrow circle. On the other hand, we say a person is rich in ideas, a work abounding in ideas, a composition full of ideas, when they are remarkable for the mental and moral power displayed in them.

And as idea, according to the metaphysical definition of the word, is the notion imprinted on the mind, *ideal* applied to works of imitation designates their characteristic quality, in as much as they are produced by the principle of the notions which belong to the labour of the judgment and understanding.

The senses and the mind are so linked together, < and the connection existing between the operations of both those faculties is such, that human reason may well despair of explaining the mystery. But in the theory of the fine arts this solution is not required ; it is sufficient that the two-fold fact be recognized, that, in the formation of

ideas, there is one action proper to the senses, and another which is proper to the mind. Hence, setting aside all question as to the origin of ideas, our theory being in accordance with language, which is a kind of universal criterion, recognizes, in the works of imitation, as in the twofold faculty whose concurrence is necessary, two species of qualities which divide them into two classes.

The works of the first class, produced by the action of the senses in particular, have the individual work of nature for their absolute and exclusive model, and it is essential to this manner of imitating, that it be conformable to what it takes for its model, without adding, curtailing, or changing any thing whatever. It is imitation in the world of realities.

The works of the second class are specially produced by that faculty of the understanding, which takes for their model, not only what the outward sense sees in reality, but also what can only be discovered by that organ which scrutinizes the causes and motives of nature, in the formation of things and beings. As such a model has nowhere any material existence, and as it is the mind that alike copies and discovers it, the works resulting from it are called creations or inventions. (It is imitation in the world of ideas;—*ideal imitation*.)

Ideal signifies, therefore, whatever, in the imitation of the fine arts, is composed, formed, and

executed by virtue of that faculty in man, which enables him to conceive in his mind, and to realize what he has conceived, that is to say, a whole such as nature would never present to him in its reality.

It may now be readily seen, how wrong it is to apply the notion of the ideal (as it is too much the custom to do in the arts of design), solely to works which require the imitation of beauty. I mean corporeal beauty, whether limited to juvenile or to female figures. The idea of the beautiful or of beauty, thus restricted, would confine the ideal within too narrow a circle. There is a sort of corporeal beauty belonging to every time of life, even though the farthest removed from that in which the charm of beauty, as commonly understood, shines forth. The customary idiom of languages affords proof of it. We say a beautiful old man, as we say a beautiful young one. This arises from the idea of beauty being formed from that of the perfection appropriate to every thing and being; and, therefore, every species of object, and every kind of quality being capable of perfection, may also have its ideal. Ugliness may have its ideal, as well as beauty; a satyr in a work of art, as well as a Venus. There may even be an ideal horrible. The Satan of Paradise Lost is, in its kind, as ideal as it is possible to conceive; but its character is not of that corporeal ideal beauty which the imagina-

tion conjoins with youth, when it would picture to itself, or would represent an angel. In like manner there is in poetry an ideal of all the most opposite qualities. While in Achilles we have the ideal of courage, Thersites equally displays the ideal of cowardice.

CHAPTER VI.

IDEAL IMITATION THE RESULT OF A GENERALIZED STUDY OF
NATURE.

AMONG all the ideas or notions which are formed in the mind, one of the first, the most easy to receive, and the most frequent of application, is undoubtedly that designated by the word *individuality*. The same cannot be said of the opposite idea or notion, that of *generality*.

As the eye begins by viewing in detail, before it embraces the whole together, so the mind in its operations particularizes before it generalizes. What takes place in the habitual labour of the understanding of man, has come to pass on a great scale in the successive labours of the human mind. Thus, little by little, has the labour of imitation, in all its modes, progressed from particular observation to general knowledge, and from the simple to the compound.

This would seem to require some explanation : for it may be thought that the simple must here

be found in that general which produces the collective whole, and that the compound must appertain to what is in detail. The words themselves will afford the explanation required. Now, we do not speak here of the work, but only of the labour of imitation, the operation of the mind. Certain it is, that the first process of this operation, which is that of instinct, is always addressed, in the labour of imitation, to what is partial or individual, and is hence confined within a very narrow circle; it is to this that the idea of simple is applied. Hence the idea of compound accords with that labour of the judgment and understanding, which embraces the grand relations of objects and their most extended points of view,—a labour, the result of which is generalized imitation.

It is not required of us to go back into the earliest periods of time to learn when imitation had its commencement.

Several efforts have been made with that end in view, and some differences have been found, in different countries, as to its point of starting, and the direction of its advance; we shall, however, again advert to this topic more especially as respecting art among the Greeks (see Chap. x.); but the historical account hereafter given of the original cause of the imitative system of the Greeks being constituted on the ideal, does in no wise contradict what we have here advanced respecting the natural progress of the mind, pro-

ceeding in its labour of successive observations from the particular to the general ; the effects of which are alike evident in many of the Grecian works.

Furthermore, those effects are daily manifested before our eyes, in the works of pupils and beginners. Certain it is, that in great things as in little, and whatever may be the point of view selected for observation, we shall always find that the imitator takes at first an individual or partial model. His first, his only care, is at the stage we are speaking of, to render the result of his imitation as like its original as possible, without troubling himself about or even thinking of, making himself acquainted with what may be defective or imperfect in that original.

Indeed, to judge of the qualities and defects of the individual, or of the particular model, requires and leads to the supposition of a knowledge of generalities or of the general model. Now, such knowledge follows only in the train of numerous comparisons, which are always necessarily the result of long experience.

In following out, either by reasoning or actual example, the progress of the operations of the mind, we become convinced that this experience, acquired at length from drawing parallels between a great number of models, must render perceptible to the imitator,

That extreme fidelity in adhering to the reality

of a single model, cannot but be extreme fidelity towards nature ;

That nature could not have made or designed any being individually, or any thing in particular, with the view of benefiting imitation ;

That the supreme Ordainer, in the organization of living beings, and the direction of human things, must have had other points in view, than those relating to the study or the wants of art ;

That, therefore, (the artist ought to seek the rules of the imitation of nature) and the principle of the perfection to which he aspires, not in the ever varying detail of the individual creature, subject to so many conditions that are foreign to the ends of art, but in the aggregate of the system or original type of the creation, which the limited sight of the senses is incapable of grasping.

So soon as the knowledge of the proper means of art and of the laws of nature, in the reproduction of their respective works, had taught how rightly to discern the particular from the general, to view the former through and in the latter, that is, by referring the individual instance to the original type, the ideal had its birth.

It was consequently acknowledged that in the material world, or that of bodies (no individual could combine the collective whole of external perfections possible to each of its parts, and which it has pleased nature to distribute more or less unequally among all) (See the following Chapter.)

It was acknowledged that in the moral world it would be useless to expect from a single character, the universality of the qualities which our minds are capable of forming an idea of, that it would be vain to seek in a single man the perfected compound of all the excellencies with which each is differently endowed. It was acknowledged that in the natural course of things, the subjects of historical action proper for poetical imitation, could never be presented to the poet with that agreement of circumstances, and that aggregate of conditions so necessary to the effect which the art of the poet is bound to produce. Lastly, the conviction followed, that as nature neither had furnished nor could furnish any perfect and complete model for imitation, as regards art, so it remained for the genius of the artist itself to complete by a judicious combination, the qualities of the particular model.

This the true imitator did : and he could alone do it by generalizing, through extensive observation, the study of nature, and reducing it to a system. Now, this system is nothing else than the ideal type of imitation, a type formed not on this or that isolated work of nature, but on the generality of the laws and motives manifested in the universal whole of her works.

It was therefore no longer the particular work, but the general motive of the supreme Worker, that became the true regulator of the operations

of art, and here we see why ideal imitation must be accounted pre-eminently the imitation of nature. If we consider that we are imitating her when we are ruled only by one of those partial productions which are frequently but deviations from her plan, do we not imitate much more and much better, when we appropriate the very principle of her laws, and study the collective whole of the universal order of nature on which those laws are imprinted?

In this new course of imitative studies the mind of man must have sought out, not only whether this or that production of nature were pleasing, but also why it pleased. It was necessary to inquire the cause of the pleasure, as well in the co-relation of our sensations with each created object, as in the conformity of their properties with the principal end for which they were designed.

But, as we shall hereafter discuss more in detail, nature, in endowing its creatures with a multitude of different functions, could not keep in view as an only or even principal end, that of pleasing us, in the sense in which we understand the pleasure that results from imitation. On the contrary, it was by concentrating all its means on this single point, by directing them to this sole aim, that art became in some measure the rival of nature.

Before entering farther into the investigation of

the notion of the ideal, and making the principle of it more especially known, that is to say, before pointing out to the understanding the track that genius pursues in order to attain it, I deem it necessary to do away with the false impressions that the word ideal occasions in the minds of many, and to contend against the erroneous consequences that the misunderstanding of that notion induces them to draw from it, both on the part of those who construe the word in too restricted a sense, and of those who, applying only the lights of the imagination to this description of criticism, reject all theoretical analysis from matters of taste and sentiment.

These last more especially, considering the ideal under the confined relation of what they call beauty, are not desirous of being told what it is, but of being taught the practical means of producing it. Now this practical notion can no otherwise be communicated than by example. Suffice it to say, that it is beyond the power of the writer.

We cannot here entertain any other object than that of setting forth the ideal in its principle, and its effects, as being the definitive goal of the efforts of art, and the true end of imitation.

CHAPTER VII.

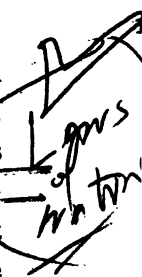
OF THE INFERIORITY OF THE WORKS OF ART COMPARED WITH
THOSE OF NATURE, UNLESS RECOURSE BE HAD TO THE IDEAL
MODEL OF IMITATION.

THE mistake so frequently fallen into concerning the notion of the ideal in imitation, arises from another very common mistake as to the meaning that should be attached to the word *nature*.

Whatever exists, exists doubtless in nature, which is the whole; but as far as imitation is concerned, nature does not conversely exist in every object. It no more exists there than the whole does in its part. Yet are there founded on this confusion of ideas, certain manners of seeing, reasoning, and perceiving. This object, it is said, this being, this individual, is in nature: (it is then a natural object, and, in imitating a natural object, I am imitating nature) Such is the argument adduced. If, for instance, it be applied to the arts of design, it is certain that all imitation produced by virtue of this argument, will be imitation of an individual.

But we have already said, and every one knows it, that nature (when we take account of all that entered into her designs) did in no wise propose to create perfect models for art, with a view to the imitations man might make of her works. It would be too ridiculous to suppose that she had ever entertained such a design. Besides, every thing teaches us the contrary. The mere diversity apparent in the physical qualities and external conformations of creatures, evinces to us that, the principal end of nature being the pro-creation or reproduction, and the preservation of beings, she has subordinated this twofold end to adequate means, whose wonderful efficiency has never been belied. This vast and elaborate performance she has subjected to principles of perpetual and invariable action, and also to a multitude of secondary influences, which operate according to the general tendency of her will, or her laws, and are continually producing an infinite number of deviations which form probably a part of the, to us unknown, disposition of her designs.

It is by studying nature, not partially and in detail, but in the collective whole of her plans, that we attain to a knowledge of what is, or is not, conformable to her general laws, that, penetrating the mystery of her intentions, we grasp at once the principle of order that rules over the whole system of creation, and the reasons of the irregularities we remark in the things created.



Now the irregularities we speak of, are common to all the works of nature of whatever kind.

“As concerns organized bodies,” says a modern writer,* *“nature seems to despise the individual, and to have regard only to the species.”* Individuals must then be to us as so many means of studying the species; while we learn from the species to rectify the individual. What would accrue to the artist were he to confine himself to imitating an individual? He would find something of nature, but not nature herself. For nature, as respects the organization of bodies, has subordinated generation to a number of secondary causes, which are insufficient to produce the entire expression of her will, seeing that it is frequently necessary to regard the individual in its relation with the species, as the exception which only serves to confirm the rule.

But, the imitator will say, I have not left it to chance in selecting the individual that I imitate. In the choice I have made, I have first of all rejected all deformed or mal-conformed individuals; and have afterwards taken as my model the one that seemed to me the most perfectly made.

Well and good, I would reply, you have then acknowledged that the nature which you propose to imitate does not exist in every individual, al-

* M. Say, *Economie Politique*, vol. ii., p. 142.

though that individual be natural. Since you would make choice of one amongst several, you are apparently guided by some rule. Certainly, you say, I have compared ; I have brought together several models ; comparison has been my rule of guidance. But, I would again answer, you are doing no more than repeating the same thing in other words. You have compared, you have judged, that is all. What I ask is, whence you have derived the rule of your judgment ? You are compelled to avow that it was from reasoning and sentiment. Truly so, and in fact what other judge is there, what other guide for our judgments on the works of nature, than the sentiment of beauty, ruled by experience of what is useful, that is, by reasoning, which enables us to discern in every object wherein it approaches, wherein it is remote from, the original design of nature, from that type, the impress of which every creature bears, although the perfection of that impress may be more or less modified in detail by secondary causes ?

If then one is compelled to arrive at this result, I have only to add that such result is nothing more nor less than the theoretical principle of the ideal in imitation.

But it will still be necessary to persuade the majority of persons, that there is not, and that there cannot be, a single perfect creature ; that

the separate works of nature, as they each combine a greater or less amount of those perfections, the total of which forms what is termed the complete type of beauty. But even in the most defective beings, in those farthest removed, by the action of secondary causes, from that regularity which art aspires to, there still remains enough to call forth our admiration, in a multitude of qualities each in relation with the ends that nature had designed them for.

The external form of creatures is in fact but the least part, is but the envelope of the infinite marvels comprised in the organization of bodies. This external form, if we suppose it ever so defective, is, nevertheless, even in that state of deformity, endowed with immense advantages over all that is most regular among the productions of art. Life, motion, sensibility, and that principle of intelligence which animates the most imperfect bodies, may each challenge, individually, all the perfections of imitation.

Art, in the imitation of bodies, has only at its disposal that external form, that least part, when compared with the wonders of the inward body, which are beyond its reach. What too shall we say of sentiment and thought, the signs and faint appearances of which, are all art is capable of rendering.

In so unequal a contest with nature, what will become of the image of art if it be brought down

to the level of that of the individual, whether it be that chance has afforded the model to the artist, or even that he himself has made choice of it. Since it is certain that no individual has been, or ever can be, produced (according to the system of nature), with that complete combination of outward perfections, which it is the office of art to realize in its image as one congenial whole, it must be admitted that a work done after a single model, will yield the palm to nature. It would in the first place yield it, by the whole distance that separates inert matter from the living being, and in the next, by the whole interval existing between the individual, considered as a partial and imperfect specimen, and the universal type of all perfection.

Nature and art have scarcely an approximate point in the formation of their works. While nature has a thousand different ends in view, art has but one. There is the same inequality in their means. The imitator errs greatly in supposing, that because he appropriates one part of nature, he can therefore embody them all, and supply her place. One of the prerogatives of the natural being, is that of having the power to please us, although far from combining every exterior quality. Thus bodies endued with life, and animated by intelligence, please us on a thousand points, that have no relation with those from which perfection of forms proceeds.

On the other hand, it is very certain that bodies created by art, have but one point on which they can afford us pleasure, and that is by their form or outward appearance. In fact, this is the only object that such description of creature has to fulfil. Again, the individual that may be adjudged by the statuary to be ill-proportioned, and of a form unworthy of imitation, may not the less perform all the numberless functions for which it was created. But what use would the statue be of, were it rendered defective by its disproportions? Is there any thing more useless than a work of art that fails in its obligation to please?

As the necessary and only end of art is to produce works capable of affording pleasure, and that only by the proper means at its disposal, the duty of the artist is to endeavour to search out and discover those means. Now he will seek where he will not find, if he look for them from an individual model, since nature has not designed any such to afford us the same kind of pleasure that a statue does. Nature herself, therefore, directs the artist to study elsewhere, and to imitate otherwise, than in and through the same model, that is, in the manner of the copyist, upon pain of seeing the work of art unfitted to bear the slightest comparison with its original.

Let us here recapitulate what has been said above, concerning the disadvantage under which the work of art labours when brought into col-

lision with that of nature : viz., that if the natural being has defects on any point corresponding with the resources of one art, those defects are frequently counterbalanced by beauties occurring under some aspect corresponding with another art. Thus even though the individual model had no other advantage over its copy, which is necessarily incomplete, than that of compensating a blemish of form, for instance, by the charm of colour, one may see at once, how much the art which is reduced to one of those two aspects, is interested in bringing to bear on that one, the sum total of perfections relative to it, perfections the principle of which can alone be revealed, and the means of execution furnished, by the ideal model.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

THE foregoing observations have naturally a more sensible relation with the arts of design, than with the other arts. Sensible is here the proper word, since by the principles of the theory of the ideal we find, that, in the imitation of bodies, there are some cases which come under the cognizance of the senses. We have therefore willingly made use of instances of this description in order to exemplify and explain our theory with greater clearness.

A perfect uniformity in this respect reigns throughout all the arts. Whether an art belong by the nature and means of its appropriate imitation, to the province of bodies and matter, or, being more particularly dependent on the mind, be allied to the moral world, as are the different kinds of poetry; both have always a twofold model in nature, and in both alike is there room for error as to the idea and meaning attached to the word nature.

The poet, just as often as the painter, confounds the idea of nature, confined to individuality, with that other idea of nature considered in its generality. Quite as often does he persuade himself that the only object of his imitation is, to counterfeit the expression of vices, passions, and follies, to trace the picture of human things and actions, and design the character of his personages, wholly and solely after such an original as he may have known, such as chance circumstances, or the narratives of history afford, or such as local causes or the manners of the age present to him.

But though passing to another order of things, the error will still be the same in kind, and it will be fully as easy to become convinced of this.

But, if physical nature, as already shown, affords, in the imitation of bodies, no finished and perfect models, as regards art and its interests, why should it be otherwise in moral nature, with all those subjects constituting the domain of poetry? Does that power which we name Providence, so dispose the course of mundane affairs with the view that events, their causes, incidents, and results may furnish the poet, epic, or tragic, with the original ready cut and dry, if one may so speak, for his art, of the action, the story of which he has to tell in songs, or display in scenes upon the stage?

When we survey the whole train of the past deeds of history; when viewing what is passing

under our own observation, we examine contemporary events, the most remarkable incidents, or the parts which persons most distinguished by their character and position play upon this stage of which we are the spectators, can we suppose that any thing therein was ordered or disposed by the great Mover of things human, with a view to provide models for the poet? Shall we find a subject in the least possible degree adapted to enter with all its historical reality, into even the most extended composition?

Poetry then has its proper subjects equally with painting. The poet cannot find them in nature ready made for his art. Innumerable circumstances are mixed up with them, which render them unfitted for imitation, that is, which would destroy both the effect and the truth of imitation. History furnishes a whole, which, consisting of an infinity of particulars, in no wise corresponds with that universal whole which belongs to art, and is made up of generalities: it is the greatest of mistakes to believe that the truth of the image, and that of reality, are the same.

Moreover, there is a sort of truth, which by imitation, is converted into falsity, as there is also a sort of falsity which becomes the highest degree of truth in art.

I will explain. Since it is for the poet, by the nature of his obligations, to bring together under one head, that is, within a given space cognizable

by the visual faculties of the mind, what the chance of events has disjoined and scattered over different times, and separate places, and among incidents without coherence one with the other, he would be wanting in the proper truth of art, were he to proceed to the exposition of an action, in like manner as would the historian. Before he amuses, the historian must instruct. He has many other duties besides that of pleasing. Supposing that his account is deficient in entertainment, it will, nevertheless, by its exactitude, and precisely because he has not sought to please, afford one great pleasure resulting from its veracity, utility, &c., which are the ends of history. But the end of the art of poetry is to please, and as truth must be conjoined with pleasure, it is for the poet to seek, amid the facts of history, for the point of view most favourable to this alliance. Since his art is unfitted to appropriate things in their reality and in toto, if he is unable to transform their bald truth, he will be wanting at once in historical fidelity, and in his primary obligation, that of pleasing.

There is, on the other hand, a sort of falsity (and it would be really such in the historian) which, as regards poetry, is the only truth to be aspired to. It consists in that system, by means of which the poetic writer, neglecting details in order the better to grasp the whole, and abandoning the materiality of facts and things for the

spirit of them, refers back the scattered traits of his subject to their principle, or to their central point of view, and, instead of a review of their successive parts which would exceed the limits of his art, erects from them a new whole, which he brings to the highest pitch of expression and significance.

The poet who neglects this kind of truth when thus transformed, neglects nature, and the end of his art ; in like manner with the painter, when he flatters himself (as seen in the preceding Chapter) that the truth of bodies is to be found in their visible reality, and in the individual creature.

I here anticipate the usual objection.

Why, it will be urged, may not the poet do what nature has done ? Why may not art represent subjects, or actions, or characters, just as they are found in reality, with their discrepancies, their irregularities, and with that mixture of accidents and circumstances which belong to the reality of things ?

We have said why again and again. Because art is not nature, and does not possess her means. Because the space and time that belong to nature, are not at the disposal of the poet. Because in pretending to follow nature on the ground of realities the poet deserts that of fiction, and ceases to be a poet. Furthermore, what the poet has thought to take as the model for a single kind of poetical imitation, is in fact that of several arts

distinct from each other ; and what he has taken as the subject of a single action, might afford matter for several. There may perhaps be in a trait of history wherewith to form, according to the aspects it presents, a tragedy, a poem, a tale, and a romance. Every art has its portion of the model, and what is wanting to that integrity which nature denies to each one in particular, must be supplied by its own proper means. Nature herself tells us that though she has made dramas, yet that she has no more destined them for our stage, than her pictures for our canvass and our frames, or her individuals to become statues.

The endeavour to embrace in imitation the totality or reality of subjects and natural objects, with means limited on every side, evinces a willingness to remain inferior to nature on every point.

The poet then, as well as the painter, has necessarily two models, the one being as it were the soul of the other. That is to say, whatever comes within the circle of imitation of any and every form of composition in poetry, has for the senses a truth of reality, and for the mind that of abstraction or generalization. Now, this last kind of truth, which rightly belongs to the genius of every art, can alone raise the power of the means of imitation to a level with those of the grand model, this alone can render the image capable of rivaling nature.

In the third Part of this work, what may be termed the machinery of the ideal will be treated more in detail, when, having to discuss the means available to imitation in attaining it, we shall point out in what manner every art is bound to proceed, in making anew, recomposing, and modifying every subject, its elements, its appearance and its forms. (See Part III. Chap. ix.)

It were well here to instance beforehand, the extraordinary objection that is urged against this theory; extraordinary because, far from weakening, it only serves to corroborate it.

Many persons maintain that what we require from imitation may be found in the very works that we condemn, since it is physically impossible to realize the effect of identical repetition; so that, they add, it is useless to enjoin the poet to do what he cannot avoid doing, and what consequently he always does more or less.

Doubtless; but on that more or less, the whole question turns; and the more or the less depends farther, on the way in which this is to be understood, that is, in the spirit of things, rather than according to the letter.

It is well known that imitation never can, according to the strict meaning of the terms, be wholly moulded upon any model whatever. It would evince a want of fairness, or of good sense, to take these notions and the terms made use of for explaining them, in their strictly literal mean-

ing. When we speak of identical imitation, and the repetition of reality in works of painting, we do not intend that these words should be taken in any more positive sense, than that expressed by the idea we have of a mirror of the objects. All these phrases ought to be taken in a figurative sense, and the fault we have been speaking of would not be at all diminished, even though it could be proved that, in the image, there was nothing traced or moulded, and that there was nothing mechanical in its effect.

We also aver that, even on the stage, where illusion by means of identity may be carried to the last degree, there can but exist an approximation to reality, in works the most infected with that vice. Even in such pieces as are irregular in their plan, false by reason of the affectation of truth, and whose pretensions to the reality of action seem to exclude both art and imitation, the author cannot avoid making frequent compromises with his model. He is compelled to curtail, and add many things, and to modify many others, in order to introduce them within the moral frame of his composition. This would not prevent the work from being considered to have been executed according to the system of identity, in the spirit of reality; and he who should be unmindful of it, would stand self-accused of being incapable of conceiving a single idea in the world of theory.

Allowing the fullest force to the justification of

the false imitation we are contending against, granting that, even in works which are virtually tainted with its defects, the author cannot but make a part of the sacrifices, and submit to a part of the controlling circumstances, which tend to modify and change the elements of the actual reality of what he has chosen for his model; what will result from it? That there are, in truth, no means of imitating, without having recourse to the system of the ideal, and that every artist idealizes more or less without being aware of it.

There are indeed degrees of the ideal; and this will scarcely be denied if it be granted that the notion of the ideal is opposed to that of reality. It is clear that the interval which, in the theory as in the practice of the works of art, separates these two states of imitative resemblance, will present different degrees to the artist, that is, differently graduated means of producing more or less that species of pleasure which, as we have seen, is the true end of imitation.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEREIN THE WORK OF ART MAY SURPASS THAT OF NATURE.

IN assigning pleasure as the end of imitation, we have already said, and we cannot too often repeat it, that there are two kinds of pleasure; one, that of the senses, limited in its principle and its effects; the other, that of the mind, its source inexhaustible, and its effects infinite.

The difference of these two kinds of pleasure is readily appreciable. The foregoing remarks have afforded a reason for it, and explained how, and why, imitation, when confined within the bounds of the real and individual, cannot satisfy us in what our better part requires of it; for sentiment and taste require that it should be capable of supporting a parallel with nature. Now, in the system of individual imitation, the parallel cannot but prove to the disadvantage of art, if it be true that the pleasure procured by such imitation, cannot rise higher in degree, than that which

a portrait, in whatever branch of art, would afford us.

What matter, it will be urged in reply, though imitation be confined to portraiture; if it retrace with exact fidelity the lineaments or characteristics of a man, for instance, it will always please us, because it is that property in the arts of reproducing our own image that more especially pleases us.

We neither deny the existence nor the legitimacy of this taste, which is perhaps the primary source of imitation. It is indeed impossible that man can do otherwise than refer to himself what proceeds from himself; now imitation is a result of his instinct; but that same instinct which leads him to constitute himself the centre and aim of the works of art, would end in contracting our pleasures within too narrow a circle, and reducing them to too small an amount.

Doubtless, man likes to see himself represented by the works of art. But how, and to what end?

It is forming a wrong estimate of this taste to imagine, that it is sufficient if we find, in the images of the arts, mere mirrors reflecting the reality which is always before our eyes. The man that we take a pleasure in viewing, because we find advantage in studying ourselves through him, either in the expression of our sentiments and our passions, or in the emotions of our minds, or in the harmony of our outward forms, that man

good in the process
of transformation

is not such an one as we can every where see the original or the copy of ; but a man generalized by art into the ideal, whose image has been modified or fashioned, not after what is termed the nature of a model, but after what I term the model of nature

Now the nature here in question is not cognizable to the senses of every body. At once invisible and present, it is in every place, and is yet nowhere. It is every where discoverable by the keen eye of genius, and every where eludes him who sees but with the eye of a copyist.

In short, we need but remark that, since there are two ways of considering nature, the one in the details of her works, the other in their collective whole ; the one in the partial instance of the individual, the other in the type of the species ; the one in productions subjected to the action of secondary causes, the other in the general tenor of primitive laws, whose principle is manifested to the understanding ; there are also two models for imitation. There is the model affording the imitation of a man, and that affording the imitation of man. The difference between these two models, and their imitations, is the same with that which our minds distinguish between the genus and the species, between the species and the individual.

It is then a fact, and a philosophically evident one, that the idea of nature, in so far as it em-

braces generalities, corresponds with the idea attached to the genus, or species, and not with that of the individual. Thus art does not really take nature for its model, except when it considers and imitates it within the sphere of the properties constituting the being viewed generally, or taken collectively. Then, and then only, the work imprinted, if one may so speak, in the moral or physical type, either from the idea or the general form, surpasses that fashioned after the partial and individual specimen, because nature has denied to this latter the property of expressing the sum total of the perfections that exist in the original design, and which a generalized study can alone discover and appropriate.

Imitation when it deals only with the real and individual is so inferior, as we have already seen, to the individual reality of nature, that no other resource remains, in order that it may rival the efficiency of its model and surpass it, than invoking the assistance of that other imitative process which constitutes the prerogative of art. And here it is necessary to revert to what has been already said, namely, that, as art is not nature, it must adopt different ways of proceeding. Their creations have assuredly nothing in common. Nature, in her works, does not follow the process and methods of art. Nor can art, on the other hand, take as a guide, that which would

divert it from the perfection it is capable of attaining.

But it is not the less indebted to nature for that perfection. She alone furnishes arms to overcome herself, she alone indicates the proper point of attack, and the ground on which she will yield the advantage.

That vantage ground is the ideal.

There, the artist, quitting the barren region of reality, where men, deeds, and objects present themselves only such as they are, takes his stand, and creates for us a new world, in which they are made to seem such as nature tells us they might be. There, all existences are aggrandized and ennobled, by exchanging the particular truths of imitation, for that abstract and generalized truth which comprehends the others also.

Here we see of what the secret of the ideal consists, and wherein its power is manifested. All the great works of art teach us a similar lesson.

Is the poet contented to draw the portrait of a hero, or a warrior, by the minutely detailed recital of his actions and the historical circumstances of his life? No, on the contrary, he brings together, and intimately combines, in his personage, the most prominent traits of insuperable valour drawn rather from the character, than from the history of his subject, and in the end has depicted heroism, rather than a hero. The dramatic writer pursues the same method in depicting the events which

Expression

compose his plot, under the name of this or that personage; for, it must be observed, it is far less the particular trait in history that serves as his subject, than the very passion itself, the effects of which, that trait affords him the opportunity of developing. In this point of view, which is that of the ideal, the epic or dramatic personage only serves to give a name to the poem or piece.

According to this system, the individual disappears and is replaced by the general. The actual event or the real personage serves the poet only as a means to an invention or action that is to retrace to us, either the spirit of an age, or the character of a people. (See Part III. Chap. ix.)

From those scattered traits in which the vices or virtues of a part of mankind are only partially and incompletely depicted, he sets forth a general picture of humanity. Instead of the portraiture of a criminal or a virtuous being, he delineates a picture of crime, or of virtue. Thus it is not Achilles, Orestes, Cleopatra, Phædra, Moham-
med, &c., but pride, revenge, ambition, love and
fanaticism, that he depicts to us, by bringing together and generalizing the characteristics of

those passions, whose elementary traits nature furnishes him with, while no individual could present either their aggregate or entire expression.

What else does the comic poet do, when he presents to our view pictures of the follies, extravagances, and defects of man in society. His pic-

tures are too often taken for actual portraits, and people fancy that he has made, or can but have made, only a copy of certain originals known in his own times, or that chance may have thrown under his observation. They would certainly be to him, as they would to the painter, objects of separate study, and from that study would equally result the collective whole of an abstract and generalized image. Who does not know, and distinguish, in landscape painting, for instance, those studies of points of sight, and localities reproduced by the camera obscura, which, according to the talent of the artist, may remain, either what are called views, or become ideal compositions? These then are the sources of such continual confusion. The separate study of the individual is undoubtedly necessary, but it should be with a view to arrive at the knowledge of the general being. What we maintain is, that this study is and ought to be only as a means to enable the poet to bring on the scene, the complete idea of a vice, or a folly, instead of an isolated picture limited to some action, or some trait, borrowed from a single model.

Plautus and Moliere will furnish a good example to illustrate my position, in the difference of manner in which each has traced the character of his miser. If M. Schlegel,* who has drawn a

* Cours de Littérature Dramatique, tome ii. p. 252.

parallel between them, meant to say that the *Euclio* of Plautus is more simple, that the action in which his miser plays a part, has much fewer, and less varied incidents, than that of Moliere, that the fact of a hidden treasure, the only source of the disquietudes of *Euclio*, predominates throughout the piece, produces the denouement and gives it the advantage of a greater unity of object, one would be greatly inclined to accede to his opinion. The very title of the piece might however have taught the above mentioned critic, that Plautus, by entitling it the *treasure*, or, as we should say, the *casket*, did not pretend to make a very extensive picture, but only a *portraiture of a miser*.

All that M. Schlegel has censured in Moliere proves that, notwithstanding some traits borrowed from Plautus, the French poet had conceived quite a different idea. It was not his intention to give us a single comic point of view, in one of those numerous shades of madness that render the miser ridiculous. On the contrary, by subjecting his personage to the principal traits that commonly give rise to the vice, and by displaying all the acts of his internal and domestic life tainted with this sordid passion, he proves that he wished to present to us the *picture of avarice*.

Here we see wherein the work of imitation may surpass that of nature, viewed individually and in particulars. For in the moral as in the

physical world, nature places before our eyes, and renders sensible, all that belongs to the individual, while to the mind alone she discloses what is general. Every one knows some miser, and has observed some particular trait of avarice. But in order to attain to the ideal on that head, it is not only necessary to combine in a single personage the follies of many individuals, but, by a profound study of the human heart throughout the contradictions and various aspects of vice, to seize whatever is most characteristic, and best adapted to present to view, not the person of a miser, but avarice personified.

Thus the individual being gives place to that generalized existence, which is peculiar to no one, and the actual model of which cannot be presented to us in any being whatever.

In nothing is this theory more plainly manifested, than in the circumstances attendant on the imitation of bodies, as the sequel will show; moreover, in nothing is one more easily deceived, because in no art can the reality of partial models exert so much influence over the imitator. In no form of art is the individual brought before us with so much power to mislead. Yet the artist will in vain expect from the individual the entire expression of a single one of those corporeal qualities, whose character he wishes to determine and represent. For instance, he might from a single individual represent a strong man. But

where did the statuary Glycon find the model of Strength? Why is not that model, which we see to this day in his Hercules, represented in any living individual? Why, but because it never has been and never will be so found. Genius, which, by the combinations of art, assembles together in one whole, what nature has promiscuously distributed, can alone surpass it on this point, and it is genius that creates the ideal of strength.

The same may with equal truth be said of every corporeal quality. Granting that the artist produce a beautiful figure, after a beautiful person; such person, though possessed of beauty, is not beauty itself, and the figure, that is, its portraiture, cannot afford us a complete image of this quality, since it was made after a model necessarily incomplete. *The function of the model*

This (as already said) does not tend to exclude the study of the individual model from the labours of the artist, since it is, on the contrary, by the observation of details or particulars that we attain to generalities, that is, to the ideal. This serves to show, that the artist must do, by the aid of art, what nature has not done, because, apparently, it was unnecessary that it should be done, which is explained by the difference of the end in view. (See Chap. vi.) Nature has to bestow her cares in ordering the vast, the infinite, the universal whole. Art, only on what is of all things the most limited, on a single work and a

single kind of pleasure. Herein lies its only superiority, and which it is not permitted to renounce, for if it do so, it is at once divested of the only advantage it possesses over nature, in all that concerns the outward form of bodies.

The view here taken which displays the true end of imitation, the only one worthy of the fine arts, is nothing more than (as seen in the preceding chapters) the system of the ideal.

This system, which sentiment had employed long before reason had essayed to analyse it, does not, as some would seem to believe, exclude the artist from the circle of nature. Far otherwise, it enlarges for him its horizon, by laying open to his mind, through the effect of generalized study, the mysteries of that beauty, and that truth, which all the senses could not penetrate unaided. For the ideal, far from being in opposition to the true, is, in every form of art, the very highest degree of truth, that in which objects are comprehended in their fullest extent, in order to furnish an image the most complete.

It is by virtue of this system, that the secret of that perfection which is hidden from the eyes of the vulgar amid the generalities of existent things, is revealed to the imitator. It opens to the artist the depository of the universal laws of nature, and leads him to the source of the profound impressions produced through the intervention of the

senses, by the enthusiastic perception of intellectual beauty.

By it, the art of sounds becomes the interpreter of the highest thoughts, simple relations of lines manifest the laws of the creation, the harmony of beautiful proportion raises the mind unto the Creator, and a single work of art, as limited with respect to its object and its constituent matter, as nature is unlimited, is rendered capable of producing on all men, and through all time, effects that nature herself might envy.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE ORIGINATING CAUSE THROUGH WHICH THE IDEAL STYLE
IN WORKS OF ART WAS INTRODUCED INTO, AND PERPETUATED
IN GREECE.

WHEN passing in review the different acceptations of the word ideal, and the various relations under which its notion may be considered in the sphere of imitation, we must not omit to notice a manner of employing it, which, though undoubtedly very limited, is yet not without a sensible connection with the object of our investigations. I here allude to the emblematic sign, whose property it also is, while partaking in some measure of the force of alphabetical characters, to generalize the expression of objects by the abbreviation of their forms.

A sign is in fact a summary or abridged image, as an image is a developed sign of each object, subject, and action. A sign is, consequently, a sort of ideal, and, mathematically speaking, is the most generalized representation of a thing, seeing that such representation is evidently the opposite

of that which particularizes the same thing by its details.

The explanation of this notion cannot be any-wise foreign to our theory if it contribute to our rendering with clearness an account of the principle and spirit, that from the very outset guided in Greece the first steps of imitation towards its true end, and gave to art a most fortunate direction.

It is indeed remarkable that art having birth in writing by emblematic signs, namely, hieroglyphics or symbols, could, in its first stage, be exercised only in representing, by forms of the greatest simplicity, the most abstract and generalized ideas. This cannot be doubted, when we see through what a succession of ages (the heroic ages) it had to repeat, and modify progressively, configurations, which, instead of being the true representations of things, were only more or less conventional expressions of the ideas or relations of those things.

The frigid conventions of the emblematic sign were perpetuated in those first figures. But imitation, speedily becoming more independent, the thing or idea signified gave place, in men's imaginations, to the object which was only intended as its expression. What had been only the sensible character of an abstract idea, was endued by credulity with an existence, a personality, imaginary it is true, but which was only so much the

more in accordance with the spirit of imitation. Thus, embodying in imagination the objects of the ancient symbolic writing, people came to consider as real men, what previously were only letters, or more or less arbitrary signs. This was the second, and perhaps the most important, step in the progress of imitation.

These signs having been converted into men or living beings, so deemed, their figures preserved somewhat of the non-imitative character and simplicity of their original type. This taste and style being handed down, continued to render more and more sensible the principle of an abstract existence, of a nature very far removed from the principle of identity. Exercised, not as elsewhere, in representing, according to the manner or in the sense of portraiture, individuals known, or real, or having really existed, but fanciful beings, imaginary or poetical, art was concerned only with a kind of conventional imitation which, philosophically speaking, was ideal, since it had no tendency to give the image of any person in particular.

Such, strictly speaking, was the second style of imitation in the earliest schools of Greece. Many of their works that have come down to us testify, by an uniform style common to all, the influence of an abstract principle presiding over the birth of imitation. It is more particularly evidenced by the absence of detail of forms, by a stiff and

~~rectilinear style of design, by monotonous physiognomies, and by an absolute want of expression in the heads, and variety in the positions.~~ Then, again, no peculiar character, according to the difference of subject, is distinguishable either as to person, condition, or age. At that time, and indeed long after, the art of resemblance, which constitutes that of portrait painting, was unknown; for from Pliny we learn, that, at that period, and even down to the time of Lysistratus, co-*eval* with Alexander, beauty of form alone was looked for in portraits.*

At length when the primitive sign, or the emblematic style that sprung from it, had been forgotten, and the works of imitation consequently bore no longer the imprint of that style, which may strictly be called abstract or ideal, that is to say, when the sign and its equivalent had given place to images conceived in another order of ideas, and after the manner of poetical personification, as when *knowledge* became *Minerva*, *light* *Apollo*, &c., the want of another kind of ideal was forced on the genius of the artist, and opened to imitation that boundless career in which poetry was already far advanced.

Guided by it, and emboldened by its example, art created for itself a new world, in which the imagination of the artist rejoiced to realize the in-

* Quam pulcherrimas facere studebant.

ventions of the poet, by means of forms and bodies. Into this world of abstractions all the sentiments and passions of man were without
doubt transported, as well as every trait and every corporeal attribute of humanity. But those beings at once natural and supernatural, men and gods, must, if so represented as to be in conformity with established credence, necessarily surpass mere mortals in perfection, beauty, strength, and dignity.

The signs of emblematic writing had certainly first given occasion to the mythological inventions of poetry. But it is easy to conceive how the poet, being freed from the restraints of matter, in the creation of the beings with which he peopled his Olympus, would quickly outdo his models. We see also that he subsequently soared aloft into the illimitable spaces of the ideal, and defied the works of the chisel or the pencil ever to equal the proportions with which he had invested the gods. It was indeed poetry that constituted their superhuman nature by the imaginative configuration with which it endued them, by the facility it enjoyed of establishing between them and men, that immeasurable distance as to dimensions and faculties, the relative degrees of which Homer seems in some measure to have fixed with regard to each divinity.

Obliged in his turn to draw upon the sources of the poetic ideal, compelled to be in accordance

with the inventions of the poet, the artist had no other means of rivaling them, than by producing a corporeal perfection, which was itself an abstraction, that is, an imitation of man, looking beyond the confined sphere of individuality, and so fitted to become the image of privileged beings, who could not be assimilated to any one man considered in particular; and here we have at once the definition and the history of that style which must be termed the ideal style of imitation.

It was more especially a consequence of that polytheist religion, which, after having employed signs in a similar sense of relation to that of letters with words, contributed to clothe its emblems with a character fitted to convert them into purely corporeal images, and adapt them to express by their forms, the most abstract creations of the mind.

This novel influence of religion on the arts, due no doubt to the revolution they themselves had contributed to bring about, produced a reciprocal influence on the part of religion over the arts. Instead of being, as in other instances, its slaves, they became its ministers and interpreters. In fact, every Grecian divinity, with its poetical forms and mythological attributes, became a compound of abstract ideas and general properties, which art was insufficient to render sensible to the eye, and intelligible to the mind, without the intervention of an ideal or generalized style of imitation.

It must, therefore, be remarked, that these imaginary beings, to which the abstract sign of emblematic writing had given birth, subsequently received a new existence from the abstract fictions of poetry ; but, being afterwards subordinated, in the successive developments of art, to another order of ideas, the result was that they did but exchange the abstract quality of the sign, for that equally abstract of the image ; in other words, the character of ideal writing, literally speaking, for that of an imitation which was constrained to be ideal, poetically speaking.

This brief account may suffice to explain the causes that have given rise to the ideal taste in all the arts in Greece, and at different periods ; — a singular phenomenon, without parallel in the history of any people, and to which familiarity with its effects alone hinders us from paying more attention. For as it is certain that we are indebted to Greece for this style of imitation, and all its consequences, so is it equally certain that no other nation of the ancient world ever suspected the existence of it, and that no modern one could ever have combined the least part of the conditions necessary to its discovery and development.

In Greece, on the contrary, as every thing contributed to give birth to it, so every thing concurred to extend, and render it common even to works which would seem to have been most alien to it. The artist obliged to form, and the people

CHAPTER XII.

THE NOTION OF THE IDEAL, AS ENTERTAINED IN THIS THEORY
IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THAT OF THE WRITERS OF ANTI-
QUITY.

THE theory of the ideal, as here presented, is based on notions drawn from the very nature of things, and on facts or examples which are irrefutable. It has also the advantage of having in its favour the testimony of the writers of antiquity, their suffrage and that of the artists being mutually accordant. It would therefore seem useful to compare on this point, the speculative doctrine of the philosophers who of old time have traced back things to their causes, with the practical execution, the effects of which, as evidenced by the monuments of art, perfectly coincide with the precepts of theory.

We shall only cite a few passages from two of the philosophical writers of antiquity, the most celebrated however for their genius, their taste, and their varied knowledge in the arts, namely, Cicero and Plato, who appear to us to have alike

conceived and explained with great clearness, wherein the ideal consists.

There is a very remarkable passage of Cicero on this subject, which is more especially worthy of notice, and which might indeed serve at once as text and corollary to a complete theory on this matter.

The Roman writer announces that he is desirous of tracing as the model of an orator such an one as had never existed : * *In summo oratore fingendo, talem informabo qualis nemo fuit.* That is to say, he proposes to show what is perfection on that head, although well knowing that only separate and different traits of it will be found, according to the qualities by which each orator may be distinguished. "I lay it down as a principle," he continues, "that there is nothing of whatever kind so beautiful, but that there is something more beautiful above and beyond it, which may be imitated as an original, inaccessible to our senses, and which mind and thought alone can embrace." *Quod neque oculis, neque auribus, neque ullo sensu percipi potest, cogitatione tantum et mente complectimur.*

Cicero gives us to understand by this, not, for instance, that this or that particular model is wanting in beauty, but that there is always over and above every beautiful object, how beautiful

* Cicero, Orat. ad Marc. Brutum, § 2. 7.

soever it may be, a type of intellectual beauty that we discover by virtue of the understanding. Now this is the signification we attach to the ideal.

It is rendered still more sensible in the example given of it by Cicero.

He adds: "Phidias, when he formed the statue of Jupiter, or of Minerva, did not study any individual in order to draw a resemblance from it, but there existed in his own mind a type of superior beauty, upon which he fixed his attention, and by which he directed his art and his hand." *Neque enim ille artifex (Phidias) cum faceret Jovis formam aut Minervæ, contemplantur aliquem à quo similitudinem duceret, sed ipsius in mente insidebat species eximia quædam, quam intuens, in eaque defixus, ad illius similitudinem artem manumque dirigebat.*

To imagine, as some have appeared to do, by the meaning they assign to this passage, that Phidias formed his statues without consulting any living model, that he paid no regard to that which constitutes truth in the imitation of the human body; that in short he worked, as we should term it, empirically, is assuredly a supposition contrary to all probability, and is directly belied by the most positive authority. In the remains of the statues of the Parthenon, we possess, as every body must be aware, works which are either those of Phidias, or of his school, and in which

"direct observation of"

the imitation of the true is carried to the highest point.

So to interpret it, would consequently be refusing to understand, in what Cicero has said, what he intended to say. It is not a question concerning the principle or the rules of art in forming statues, but respecting a comparison brought forward as being well adapted to illustrate the idea of that intellectual original of which he had spoken. Cicero knew well that it is by studying bodies that we are enabled to imitate them. He could not suppose that such study would have been of no avail to Phidias. But he knew also that there are two ways of applying it in the imitation of the human body; and the passage proves it, by the very circumstance of his having distinctly alluded to the two models of such imitation. For when he says that Phidias did not form Jupiter or Minerva after a model which he drew the resemblance of, he affords us every reason to think that he was acquainted with that kind of imitation which deals in particulars.

Those who would hence conclude without restriction, that Phidias made use of no living model whatever, would miss the sense for want of embracing the whole of the sentence. That sense is determined by the words *aliquem* and *è quo similitudinem duceret*. *Aliquem* designates a single individual, or a particular model, *R. similitudinem*

duceret signifies to imitate after the manner of portraiture or of imitation in particulars. Now Phidias chose none such, either as subject, or object, when he formed the statues of Jupiter, or of Minerva.

Cicero specifies the kind of imitation that has to do with the individual, as that to which the labour of Phidias was not limited ; I say *was not limited*, because to maintain that one does not make the copy or portrait of a single model, is not to maintain that one makes use of no model at all. But having thus distinctly pointed out individual imitation, as not being that of the Jupiter or Minerva of Phidias, he characterizes yet more clearly the ideal kind of imitation, acknowledged as having been that of his works, and in which this great artist especially shone, the true model of which imitation can only be found in the type of beauty and perfection, which the artist had attained by his studies and genius, and which he could nowhere see but in idea.

This point cannot be better explained than Cicero has himself done in what immediately follows : *Ut igitur in formis et figuris est aliquid perfectum et excellens, cujus ad cogitatam speciem imitando referuntur ea quæ sub oculos ipsa cadunt, sic, &c.* “ As therefore there is in regard to the forms of bodies, a superior type of perfection, to the ideal example of which all objects presented to the eye are referred, so,” &c.

Thus, according to Cicero, we cannot but refer the external images of things to another and mental image which is our point of comparison.

I think this doctrine of the ideal may be verified by a single fact that we have before referred to, (Part II. Chap. iv.,) namely, that if ever so many artists be set to copy the same model, the respective copies will present as many dissimilarities as there are copyists. In accounting for this fact, it is the custom to say *that this arises from each one having his own manner of seeing it.* Which is as much as to say, that each sees only as he sees, by virtue of some cause that determines him so to see. Now can this determining principle be aught else than the habit of referring the imitation of what is seen to the rule that every one forms for himself, and the objects that memory or imagination call up for comparison?

“Plato,” Cicero proceeds, “gives to these primordial types the name of *ideas*. He maintains that they do not spring up within us, but that they reside from all time in the reason and the understanding, while all else is fugitive and perishable. It is, therefore, necessary to have recourse to the primary and original idea of the subject to be treated of.” *Id est ad ultimam sui generis formam speciemque redigendum.* That is to say, we must generalize. (See Part III. Chap. v. and vi.)

We have brought forward the whole of this passage with the design of showing that what,

with us, passes under the denomination of ideal, in the works of ancient art, was perceived, understood, and defined by the philosophers of antiquity as it is at this day perceived, and as we have understood, and defined it; that the notion of the ideal as applied to the arts, was that of a work in which the artist had referred and confronted the sensible and efficient model with the intellectual model, that is, with the type of beauty and absolute perfection present to his mind; and that this internal type was the guide of his art, *artem manumque dirigebat*, and the point of comparison with the model in reality, serving to rectify its irregularities, and correct its imperfections.

It need not be wondered at that Plato, in a passage we are about to cite, lays down the same doctrine, assigning as the principal end of imitation, not the model that is scanned by the eye, or reality, but that which cannot be found individually in nature.

The ideal form that Plato speaks of, is also employed by him as an object of comparison, whereby the better to render intelligible the purpose he had in view in tracing the plan of his republic. Which proves that they are almost always deceived who take that project of government in a positive sense, since he assures us that he had only portrayed it in idea, to serve as a more sensible type with which to confront his system of justice and virtue. Now he gives this system as the *maximum*

of a perfection, beyond the reach of human power.

“What have we done,” he says,* “if it be not that we have traced the idea of a perfect government? Should we be less in the right, although not in a condition to prove that it is possible to realize it?”

And he adds: “Would you esteem him the less skilful, who, after having formed the figure of a man in the highest perfection, could not prove such perfection to be possible in nature?” (*μη δύνασθην.*)

Plato then believed that there is a perfection of form which it is impossible to meet with, that is, such as no one man in particular can afford the model of; and the opinion he held in this respect, derived from reasoning, was also proved to him by experience in the works of art of his time. Now this opinion is to us in our day, not merely an abstract and theoretical view of the question. It is well known and repeatedly avowed of some one or other of the beautiful Grecian statues that have come down to us, that they may defy nature, considered as to individuals, and that it is impossible to find a single one among them indued with all the perfection that art has presented us in its images.

It must then be allowed that the theory of the

* Plato, Rep., L. 5.

ancients on this matter, is the same with that which we have here unfolded, and that the word *ideal*, of which we have made use, is equivalent to the *cogitata species* of Cicero. Both phrases equally express that internal model, or that type of perfection belonging to every thing, a type which no reality can offer to our senses, the existence of which the study of nature can alone reveal, and to which we ought, in imitation, to refer all the sensible and particular objects that come under our notice.

Seneca broaches the same opinion when he says that *the model* of the painter may be external and internal, that the external is addressed to his sight, while the internal exists in his memory or his imagination.

Such also is that of the poet, a model which, according to Plautus exists no where, but which he nevertheless finds. *Quod nusquam est gentium reperit tamen.*

Now this model, because nowhere, is not, therefore, apart from nature or from truth, if from all that has been said we are right in concluding, that the ideal may be considered as the only nature, and the only truth, in as much as in it alone do we discover nature comprehended at large, and viewed from on high.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE IDEAL IN THEORY OUGHT ONLY TO BE EXPLAINED TO THE UNDERSTANDING, AND CAN ONLY BE SO BY RATIONAL ANALYSIS.

THE explanation of the ideal as given in this theory, and the consequence that definitively it is but *nature viewed generally or at large, and truth considered from on high*, will be sufficient to satisfy men whose minds do not require more from a theory than can be deduced by the modes of rational analysis. Now those modes are of a nature to be apprehended only by the understanding and through the channel of reasoning.

Yet that which passes under the denomination of ideal, in the fine arts, has the especial property of laying hold on the imagination, exciting admiration, and arousing the sentiments. And what is true with regard to that which produces such effects in its works, is equally true with regard to that which receives them.

Hence it is that most persons understand the ideal in a certain vague and indefinite manner, of

which they are able to give no account, and which does not admit of any explanation.

Yet the matter is very simple.

The notion of the ideal in the operations of the artist, and in the decomposition of the resources by which it is attained, may be subjected to an analytical investigation, which will disclose to the mind its means by their effects, and its effects by their means. It is for theory to do this, and it does not pretend to, neither can it, address any other than the reasoning portion of the mind. This portion or, if it be preferred, this faculty, is precisely that which is the least exercised (and necessarily so) by those who have cultivated that other faculty of the mind, which goes under the name of imagination and sentiment.

Now the imagination and sentiment of each person would fain require that it should be explained to them, what the ideal is, in the sense in which each imagines it, and as each perceives it.

I see but one answer, which is, that the imagination or the sentiment can only be employed about an explanation of this sort.

But how could sentiment be explained by sentiment, and the impressions of the imagination by the imagination?

I know of nothing more resembling a vicious circle than the explanation of a thing by the thing itself.

And this is exactly the case with those theories

of the sentiments and the imagination, which, instead of explaining a notion, only paraphrase it, and by adroit combinations of ideas or words, substitute ingenious speculations, and slight sketches, for the thing required to be shown, for the whole required to be traced out. It must be confessed that lessons such as these are agreeable to the sentiments since they harmonize with them. But if we look for the result, we shall find it void. First, because sentiment is not instrumental to comprehension, it is not the organ of instruction. Second, because a theory founded on sentiment can only teach us to feel, and not to know.

This then is the reason why all that has been said and written concerning the ideal, through the promptings of sentiment, and the impulse of imagination, has never been successful in presenting a clear and distinct notion to the judgment and understanding.

As from the nature of sentiment it can neither be analyzed nor defined, so from the same cause it can neither analyze, nor define any thing.

The ideal, therefore, cannot be explained, seeing that ~~its effects emanate from sentiment and are addressed to it.~~ If the reasoning faculty, overstepping the range of its attributes, seek to ~~become to sentiment an interpreter of its impressions, it is mistaken as to the party addressed,~~ and will speak to what cannot understand it.

The object of all theory is to teach. One can

only teach what can be proved. One proves only to the reason and understanding. If, therefore, it is required that sentiment should be convinced by reasoning, sentiment will require an explanation of every explanation, a proof of every proof. There is, on every subject, a limit to all reasoning, which limit theory is bound to respect, and which it would be imprudent to endeavour to go beyond.

There commences the insolvable. Farther we cannot go. It is the mathematical line. It is the region of the imaginary, where reason quits us, and whither none can follow us. It is also that of Icarus, where the wings of the mind too frequently abandon him . . . *Pauci quos . . . ardens everxit ad æthera virtus.*

We shall not venture on so hazardous a route, but holding a middle course (*inter utrumque viam,*) shall proceed to point out to the understanding, in accordance with the object, and in the spirit, of this theory, the means through which, as taught by imitation itself, we may attain its end.

P A R T III.

OF THE MEANS OF IMITATION IN THE FINE ARTS.

Non tam inventa a præceptoribus quam cum fierent observata.

QUINTIL *Orat.*, lib. viii., proem.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY MEANS OF IMITATION,
ACCORDING TO THE OBJECT AND SPIRIT OF THIS THEORY.

IF the ideal, such as we have defined it, be the true end of imitation, which we trust has been amply shown, it is because it is its most exalted end.

Doubtless every one is free to consider imitation under a less elevated or less extensive aspect, and to confine his talent, or his admiration, to some lower point more suitable to his faculties, or his taste.

In like manner with regard to instruction, or to theories. These also admit of many degrees ; for as every one may, if he choose, confine himself to learning only one branch of an art, so no theory can be required to exceed that relative degree of knowledge which is the term of the student's inquiries.

It is otherwise with a theory purporting to be general and abstract, that is, to embrace its subject in itself, without any application merely to this or that particular point of view. If imitation form the subject of such a theory, it is indispensable that it should point out the definitive end, in other words, that beyond which there is no longer anything to be looked for.

Thus, since the object of our investigations falls within an order of ideas that belong to speculative theory, and the abstract nature of imitation leads us to recognize the ideal as being its abstract end, it should be understood that the means of which we shall have to speak, in this third Part, are very different from those to which the idea of practical execution is usually attached, the precepts of which are often more applicable to the material, than to the intellectual part of imitation.

The idea of *means*, in reference to the fine arts, carries with it, I confess, that of *execution*.

But what is termed execution, does not exclusively carry with it, in the theory of art, the idea of practical or mechanical means, and the

different treatises for instruction in every branch of art sufficiently prove it.

Elementary instruction deals with processes, or practical means. This degree of instruction, and the executive means corresponding to it, belong to the primary or practical school, and give the rudiments of each art, the rules of grammar, of writing, &c. ; it is instruction with reference only to the instrument.

There is in every art another and a higher degree. It comprehends those executive means which have their origin in the understanding, and which are given to the artist to be at once the ministers of his thoughts, and the guide of the instrument he has to employ. Suffice it to say, that they are means of this class which form the subject matter of the different treatises, that have from time to time been written on the art of poetry, on rhetoric, on the arts of design, and on those of the stage or theatre.

Thus this single division in the instruction of the arts points out to us both practical and moral means of execution, that is, means dependent on the technical, and on the intellectual instrument.

But in these two degrees, we see that the different means prescribed refer only to each art individually, and are addressed to the imitator.

The theory of imitation, as we have considered it, that is to say, within a much larger circuit than that of the theory of each art, requires that

the means assigned to it, in order that it may equally answer to its nature, and attain its end, should embrace more general and more extensive relations, than those which belong to the execution of each individual imitative mode. The kind of execution that such means will allow, is that farthest removed from the idea of practical execution, and which is least directly addressed to the imitator. Such as these are the means of imitation.

The means that we propose as those of imitation, and as necessary to conduct to its end, have then no resemblance whatever to the more or less positive means of execution, that instruction in any art furnishes to the artist; but in them may be found the analysis of the resources that the understanding and genius are enabled to appropriate, and which can alone be made known through examples drawn from works of art.

In fact, the means of which we are about to treat, are little else than conditions necessary to imitation in order to the attainment of its end, which is the ideal. Hence they must be derived from an order of notions in relation with those of the end already pointed out.

The false opinions to this day entertained with respect to the ideal in imitation, occasion the artist, who, as already remarked, frequently employs the ideal unknown to himself, to violate the harmony of the system he has adopted, so that at

one time he applies a style of execution affecting particulars, to an ideal composition, at another, belies by his composition the character of the subject he treats, and at another, brings the elements of one kind of imitation into mutual contrast with those of some other one, in the same work.

It is for want of an adequate knowledge of the means or conditions of imitation considered as to the end to be kept in view, it is for want of comprehending the conventions on which the ideal depends, and the force of their consequences, that the artist often commits in his works the most outrageous inconsistencies. So that while we see one looking forward to the right end without following the proper track, we see another entering on the proper track without thinking of the end to which it leads.

The materialist spirit in which it is so much the custom to view all that relates to the fine arts, by limiting them to the enjoyment of the senses,—the result of a doctrine that refers every thing to the outward organ, has caused the moral nature of imitation to be lost sight of. Hence those practical theories which refer every thing to a species of execution whose means are fitted for the eye alone, and are, in some measure, within reach of the hand. Thus it comes to pass that the spirit of the conventions on which true imitation rests, is neglected; and it is forgotten that

imitation is itself but a convention, the highest degree of which is the ideal.

It is then in these conventions that we shall find the true means of imitation, considered under the general point of view which belongs to this theory.

CHAPTER II.

OF CONVENTION, UNDERSTOOD AS A MEAN OF IMITATION.—OF
CONVENTIONS PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL.

WHEN treating of illusion, in Chapter xiv. of the first Part of this work, we have already alluded to that which is called *convention*, in the imitation of the fine arts, and given what is perhaps at once the truest and most palpable explanation of it.

By comparing the action of each art, in its relations with ourselves, to a game having its rules, and being in fact no longer played when either party ceases to conform to them, we showed that in like manner there are between imitation and man, certain reciprocal conditions, constituting the devices of this species of game and the means of playing it. Its end is not gain, but pleasure; and this pleasure, like gain, may be either lawful or unlawful. The same circumstances that render the gain unlawful, disannuls the game also. That which disannuls the pleasure of imitation tends also to render void, on

either part, the conditions under faith of which the effect must be attained and received.

> Custom has assigned the name of *conventions* to the various sorts of compact that hold good between imitation and man, and which the very nature of things has occasioned. Conventions are, theoretically speaking, the means of imitation, since without them, it could have no ground for operation. Moreover, they are very numerous.

Almost every thing with respect to art is founded on conventions, if it be true that all art is itself really a convention.

It will be recollected, for instance, that we have already represented the fine arts as placed around their common model, in such a position as to allow of each one comprehending no more than a single side,—a single aspect. It is precisely this limited position that occasions the physical or moral impossibility of re-producing in the image the totality of the model, and consequently renders necessary the means of convention established between ourselves and art ; their effect is to prevent us from perceiving the imperfection arising from what is wanting to imitation in order to its being complete, and also to prevent its impression from being too much weakened.

Hence, two principal classes of conventions according to the greater or less degree of positive or ideal imitation affected in the works of art. The first class comprises the means necessary to

the existence and prosecution of every art. The second, conventions of a higher order, through which the imitation of every art attains its most exalted end.

The conventions of the first class may form two sufficiently distinct divisions. The first, conventions that must be termed practical, being conditions of the very existence of all art. The second, we may term theoretical conventions, being conditions of the due effect of every art.

We shall not dwell long on the practical conventions, seeing that they are so entirely within reach of every one. For instance, all must needs be agreed in not requiring of painting the roundness of objects, or to represent more than one moment of time in an action. It is by virtue of such like conventions that we do not require of the statuary the colour of bodies, that we allow pantomime to be expressed only by gestures, that we ought not to complain, though in the music of the theatre every thing is said and done by singing, even to death itself; though Greeks and Romans speak the vernacular language on the stage; or though the actor, in conversing, turn rather toward the audience than toward his interlocutor. Every one understands this kind of conventions, and a multitude of others altogether similar which belong to the material elements of every art. They would scarcely deserve to be mentioned were not their necessary existence, as well as their undeniable

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employment, the principle, and as it were the starting point of other theoretical conventions, tending to enlarge the circle of imitation in every art, and which, more or less under the censorship of taste, form the subject of every didactic or critical treatise.

The dramatic art will best afford an idea of them.

Thus it is in consequence of such theoretical conventions that this art is enabled to develop *an action*, to represent it in *a place*, and to confine its duration within *a determinate time*. Here we see what is required from art.

Now, what, on the other hand, does art require, when conforming itself to these three kinds of unity?

It requires that we should not understand by *unity of action*, an isolated fact, deprived of all circumstances and reduced to the barrenness of absolute unity. It requires that a principal and predominant fact may be allowed to be presented, accompanied by auxiliary facts, or incidents, necessary for the development of the interest, having a perceptible bond of union, and tending to one sole end. The idea of unity, in the spirit of such convention, is that of a whole composed of parts, limited however in number and extent, by the measure of our attention, by that of the faculties of our minds, and by their capacity to

grasp what is presented to them, according as it is simple or complicated.

Some concessions on the observance of *unity of place* are also requisite to art, and we make them, provided the changes of place are not long journeys, and provided that the drama does not exceed its natural limits after the manner of some gothic paintings, in which we see a history divided into several pictures within a single frame.

Conventions on the *unity of time* are of the same nature. One cannot fix by the dial, or the hour-glass, what ought to be the exact duration of the real action, of which art affords only a fictitious appearance, that appearance being always restricted, on the stage, within a given time. Here the convention lies between the time of the fictitious representation and the presumed duration of the, supposed, real action. The question is, the mutual adjustment of these two degrees of duration. If we grant a certain latitude to art, it is on condition that it remain within the bounds of verisimilitude; and if the imagination yields itself up without wishing to take a strict account, it should be understood that its ductility is not to be abused, and that a representation in five acts is not to become a chronological exposition of the actions of a hero, or of a whole century.

I have chosen the conventions that relate to

dramatic representation as examples of those I term *theoretical*, because if there are none better known, there are also none in which it is more difficult for theory to reconcile interests frequently opposed, and contending on the somewhat doubtful line that separates actual, from imitative truth.

Conventions of this sort are from their nature liable to be the subject of dispute as to the true point, determined by taste, as that in which the two opinions agree. On the one side, whatever fails to afford a faithful portraiture of reality is treated as false in imitation, and contrary to nature; while on the other, the conventions are violated in order to enlarge indefinitely the circle of imitation, at the expense even of the truth sought after. It is forgotten that the sole object of conventions is that of serving to diminish the obstacle opposed to imitation, and not to elude or set it aside. Now this is done on both sides, either by straining the effect of the conventions, or by attempting to do without them.

The use of prologues, or of confidants, which afford opportunity for the preliminary information necessary to the due understanding of the subject, is among the number of the conventions authorized by dramatic theory. They have doubtless been abused; but a still greater abuse is the remedy some have imagined, which consists in giving to the drama antecedents the same in kind

as those that belong to history, or romance; so that a theatrical piece, instead of being a picture limited within its proper space, becomes a painting that unfolds without end. In order to avoid the slight non-verisimilitude of an indispensable convention, they abrogate the resources that constitute the work of art a fictitious creation, and reduce it to a reality which abjures rules and conventions, because in fact it abjures art. As without conventions there can be no art, so without art there would be no need of conventions.

Conventions, thus understood, are then employed with a view of affording to every kind of imitation a facility in producing its effects, and enlarging the sphere of its operation as far as nature permits, without going beyond the limits prescribed by its physical or moral constitution.

The conventions which, to distinguish them from *poetical*, I have termed *practical* and *theoretical*, are amenable to judgment and taste. When judgment or common sense requires concessions on any point, it belongs afterwards to taste to ratify them, by employing them in a befitting manner. Here, as elsewhere, abuse borders very closely on use. There is not a single convention established in favour of art that may not be turned against it, and against the species of illusion that ought to be at once encouraged and restricted; for the power of imitation is enfeebled, as well

by an excessive demand for, as a too strict denial of, illusion.

A general theory of conventions, considered in the point of view we have just adverted to, that is, as means reciprocally established between imitation and man, in order to increase and facilitate the action of the one, and the fruition of the other, would undoubtedly afford a subject for investigation as new as it would be interesting. It would furnish opportunity for a number of remarks on taste, and a variety of useful precepts, which however do not fall within our proposed plan.

The only consequence that I would myself, or would wish others to draw from these few observations is, that conventions should be looked upon as means of imitation, and that certain ones among them be considered as pertaining to the highest departments of theory. My only motive in dwelling on the first class of conventions is, in order that those which I have termed poetical conventions might come to be appreciated in a manner more accordant with their intrinsic worth, that is, as the means most nearly related to imitation, considered with respect to its definitive end.

As to the word *poetical*, I do not understand this epithet as signifying any thing that appertains to the art of poetry. It is scarcely necessary to remark that there is poetry in all the arts. *Poetical* is here employed as synonymous with *fictitious*, and consequently with *metaphorical*.

CHAPTER III.

OF POETICAL CONVENTIONS, OR THE GENERAL MEANS, WHICH,
COMMON ALIKE TO ALL THE ARTS, IMITATION EMPLOYS IN
ORDER TO ATTAIN TO THE IDEAL.

THE object of the conventions spoken of in the preceding chapter is, either to empower or assist every art in the execution of the subjects, or representation of the objects falling within the particular sphere of its action. Since those conventions, as before seen, are the means specially appropriate to that same action, restricted to its own constituent part of imitation, it is in like manner necessary that the imitative action, considered generally as to all the arts, and with reference to the highest end to be attained by them, should be endowed with another class of more extensive conventions, that is, of more general means.

I name these last, *poetical* conventions. They differ from the former in their extent, their importance, and also in their nature. For while those

are amenable to judgment and taste, poetical conventions are scarcely subjected to any other tribunal than that of sentiment and imagination.

The end of all convention in art is a sort of adjustment between what must be called the reality or positive state of being of things, whether facts, discourse, or the forms of bodies, and what must be looked upon as a mean given to the imitator, by which to effect the representation of those things. As the result of this adjustment, it becomes allowable for art to change more or less what serves as its model, and to depart more or less from the real or positive, with a view to the furtherance of imitation, and consequently of the pleasure we require from it.

It is from poetical conventions that the artist derives the most numerous, and the most diversified means of effecting in the object, or subject, of his imitation, those great changes by which he freely disposes both his model and the manner of representing it. While practical or theoretical conventions are limited to certain alterations of detail, to some omissions, additions, or modifications, in some one of the parts of the imitable object, conventions of the poetical kind, by the changes they bring about, as well in the groundwork as in the form of every object, by embracing it in its totality, give to the artist the power of transforming things, actions, persons, and their discourse, according to another order of fitness,

and in furtherance of another kind of truth. (See on Chap. vii.)

When we examine the practical and theoretical conventions, either in the necessity that gives rise to them, or in their effects, we discover that their principle is the same in all the arts, since the existence of imitation depends on it. But as to effects, they are so closely related to each particular art, that they vary according to the mode of proceeding in each. It seems to me that with poetical conventions it is otherwise. Not only is their principle common to all the arts, but their consequences are applicable to all, with no other variation than that which attaches to the difference in kind of their images. They all alike derive from them the right of exchanging, in the conception, the invention, and the execution of their subjects, the appearances, the state of being, the external forms; in short, the elements of the world of realities, for those which constitute the ideal world that genius calls into existence.

This exchange cannot be brought about but by certain operations of art, which consist in recomposing all the objects or subjects of imitation, with a view to, and in accordance with, the new part they are called upon to play. (See on, Chap. vii. and the succeeding Chapters.)

Whatever may be the quarter from which the poet selects his subject, he is bound to re-order the ground-work, the plan, the collective whole,

and the details of the facts he would treat, to give to his personages another physiognomy, to places another character, to circumstances other relations, and to set forth causes and effects in such a light as to admit of their more easy comparison ; he ought, not to betray truth, but, if one may so speak, to clothe it with new appearances in conformity with the poetical conventions of imitation.

vs. The painter (as we shall show hereafter) is equally under obligation to re-make all that belongs to the visible world, that is, to recompose the forms, the outlines, the relations, and the proportions of bodies, to modify their effects and colours, to change the locality of every scene, the incidents of every event, the traits of every expression ; in a word, to exchange a local, individual, and limited kind of truth, for truth as viewed from on high and more at large.

Elementary and theoretical conventions are slight deviations from the reality of things. Poetical conventions are means for operating in them a moral change.

As the operations by which this recomposition is effected, depend on the talent and genius of the artist, they are, in execution, necessarily allied to those faculties which are more especially the gift of nature, and which, though study and theory may add to them, they can never supply. There is then one branch of instruction which is wholly excluded from the theory of practical art. What-

ever appertains either to the arts of industry, or to the mechanical part of the arts of imitation, may be reduced to rules, may be taught and learned. But beyond these commences the region of speculative theory, and its precepts are addressed to the understanding alone. Such theory reverts back to the principles from which all rules are deduced, it has in it nothing dogmatical. The means it lays open to the artist are rather lights to enlighten him in acting, than instruments to act with.

In fact, it is not for us to inform the artist how, or with what, or by what secret he may attain to the ideal. On the contrary, he himself will inform us. While learning from him, in works that display the qualities constituting the ideal, as well what he has abstained from, what he has endeavoured to do, and what he has done, we shall confine ourselves to setting forth the result that the merest analysis proves to have arisen from the combinations of his mind. *Non tam inventa a præceptoribus quàm cum fierent observata.* Quintil., *Orat.*, l. 8., *Proem.*

Setting out from the principle already laid down, that every convention is more or less a mean of changing the reality of the model, to the enhancement of imitation, it seems to us, that, as regards the ideal, the convention to which its effect and its force are more especially due, is the recomposition of the model itself.

Hence, it is necessary that such recomposition consist in disengaging the object or subject of imitation from whatever is contrary, or merely alien, to the effect proposed by the artist, to the impressions his imitation is intended to produce, and to the kind of pleasure constituting its end.

For the better explaining this recomposition, the operations of genius and understanding that allow of being apprehended, defined, and rendered sensible by theoretical analysis, may be reduced to two principle ones, namely, the *act of generalizing*, and *that of transforming or transposing*.

Our theory may be based on these two principal conventions, since by them it is enabled to explain the operation of the ideal in works of imitation.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE ACT OF GENERALIZING CONSIDERED AS A MEANS OF
ATTAINING TO IDEAL IMITATION IN THE WORKS OF POETRY.

THE first of the means employed by the mind, being also that which it can most easily explain to itself, in this recomposition of the model effected by imitation in order to the attainment of the ideal, results from the act of generalizing, which act is peculiar to the understanding, and may by it be applied to all the arts. As we have already made some remarks hereupon (see the previous Part) our further notice of it need not detain us long.

The idea of *generalization*, in its application to the art of imitating, its operations, and its works, is very clear and simple, more especially when contrasted with the contrary idea, that of *particularization*.

To particularize, in imitation, is to express a subject, to represent an object, not scrupulously part by part, which would rather infer its decom-

position, but by whatever is particular or individual in the subject or object, that is, which causes it to be distinguished from every other.

To generalize, as regards imitation, is, not only to express a subject, to represent an object, in its collective whole, but rather in the character belonging to the genus of that object. So that an object is particularized when, according to the order of things it is dependent on, it belongs to the individual rather than the species, to the species rather than the genus. The contrary is the case with an object that is generalized.

There is no subject, no object of imitation, that does not admit of being considered by the artist, in a similar light to that in which it strikes the mind or the eye of those who make up the great bulk of mankind. There are some persons, and those not few in number, who, be the matter ever so vast and extensive, perceive only the minor details, or the side most nearly accordant with limited acquirements and narrow views, thus degrading the idea or image of every thing to their own standard. There are others capable, not only of embracing the totality of the very same objects in their widest extent, and taking an enlarged view of things great in themselves, but who can moreover refer back things the most trifling to the grand principle on which they depend, and deduce from a particular object, views the most general.

Applied to imitation, this mental faculty undoubtedly tends to enlarge all images, in as much as being formed by this operation of the mind, they acquire the property of signifying a much greater number of ideas, or ideas of a much higher order, than those attached to the image of the same subject when viewed under the limited relation of a single part, and with individuality of character.

Poetry, or the art of writing, is in the highest degree favourable to generalization, whether on account of the unlimited extent of images it has at command, or the facilities it affords for condensing them as much as possible. For a subject is at one time generalized by adding to it, at another by abridging it.

To abridge, as here made use of, does not signify to diminish from the substance of a subject, but to reduce its intrinsic value within the smallest compass.

Montesquieu says of Tacitus: "*He abridges every thing because nothing escapes his view.*" Here we have the ideal operation. It is because genius embraces every thing, that it can restrict every thing. While an ordinary writer leads us on from detail to detail, each of which effaces in turn the other, the mind that generalizes often places us by a single trait, and as it were by enchantment, on an elevated site whence the whole is displayed to view.

In every kind of subject there is some main thought that comprehends all others ; genius discovers some point of view to which every other aspect is subordinate.

Certain forms of composition in poetry admit, above all others, of the generalization of the subject, that is, of raising it above the character that would render it particular. Lyric poetry, for instance ; in none is there more palpable evidence of the intellectual operation spoken of, by which the substance of a subject is recomposed, in order to enlarge its image. We may remark that the subject of the ode is frequently to the poet only what the text is to a preacher, and that, by a privilege peculiar to him, the less is material, the greater becomes his conception. What more slight and unsubstantial than the subjects of Pindar's lyre ? A wrestler's prize, a chariot or foot race. Moreover, the name of a victor, that of the town in which he lives, and of the river that runs near it, are sufficient to lay open before the poet that unlimited space, within which he raises the most confined fact to a level with the greatest events. If the act of generalizing consist in divesting a subject of the individual appearance that particularizes it, no poet has ever yet equalled the excellence of Pindar.

No form of composition in poetry is more ideal than the ode, which serves as an evidence of the natural connexion between the notion of the ideal,

and the method of generalizing. The understanding and the imagination are alike concerned in this operation, and it belongs as much to the philosopher, as it does to the poet; certainly no writer has carried the art of generalizing farther than Plato has done, seeing that to a single idea, a single principle, he almost always attaches propositions the most numerous.

As the object of generalization is to bring together and unite many things, it can only be attained by simplifying them. To simplify, and to generalize, are therefore synonymous. Bossuet was enabled to condense his universal history into one volume, because he could refer a multitude of facts, and the revolutions of every empire, to their most simple idea, to a general fact embracing all others. The history of men and nations has since been detailed in a hundred volumes, which present to us universality without unity, and multiplicity without a collective whole.

The historian frequently finds it very difficult to generalize the subject of his narration; history and the art of writing are not therefore considered to be of necessity subjected to the conventions from which the ideal results. True it is that some historians have been assimilated to poets, when they have been able to disengage themselves from the restraints that the variety of historical detail imposes on them. But the poet is not thus shackled, and as it belongs to him to

render history available to his art, it is more especially by generalizing his subject matter, or the characters of his personages, that he exalts his inventions into the region of the ideal.

The poet ought undoubtedly to select a celebrated and important subject for the object of his strains; but the more abundant it is in details and circumstances, the more necessary will it be that he should restrict it to a point of view affording the simplest expression of it. To tell all, would not be a means of generalizing, but on the contrary, of particularizing. The genius that guided Homer in the creation of his heroic poems had revealed to him the secret of this theory. With what art has he generalized the subject of his poems, by directing towards a prominent point, with one sole and simple aim, all the springs of action in epic poetry, and by bringing out, in every part, the master idea, the moral motive of the collective whole.

On the act of generalizing does in truth depend the intrinsic value of that totality, which alone can give substance to the recitals of the epic poem, and constitute it a sort of concentric mirror, in which every thing is brought collectively together, instead of being a multilateral glass, where all is divided, parcelled out, and particularized.

A comparison of the poem of Tasso, with that of Ariosto, will afford a good example of this twofold manner of viewing and setting forth the

objects of poetical imitation. The first has succeeded in connecting in one historic whole, that is, with the greatest event of the wars of the Crusaders, and in referring to a single occurrence, albeit abounding in noble exploits, the interests, manners, characters, passions, virtues, and vices collectively of a memorable period, and his poem, a posthumous monument as it were to the glory of that age, appears to stand forth as its history. It has pleased Ariosto by an inverse system to spread out and, if one may so speak, mince up all that might have furnished an historic picture of another no less celebrated period. His poem instead of a plan woven together by art in order to re-compose the facts, presents only a succession of pieces tacked to one another, of narrations without coherency, and of actions following each other without being interlinked; hurried from particular to particular, the reader comes to the end without having attained any thing, without being able to discover any central point to the composition. They are parts without a whole; and Ariosto's poem would seem to be a versified chronicle of the adventures of that time.

Such is the difference between the act of generalizing, which composes a whole, and that of particularizing, which decomposes it.

The more limited is the space and duration to which the poet is bound to confine the image of the events that form his subject, the more will he

be obliged to make use of the process of generalization, because, as we have already said, that process, by simplifying, becomes a means of abridgment. None more than the dramatic poet experiences the necessity of making use of it. Events like those that history presents are full of diversity and contrariety. The conduct of men, the direction of affairs, the qualities and characters of personages, most frequently are in their reality but a confused mingling of contradictions, which history may take time to unravel, in order to discern and unfold to us the truth.

But art has neither time nor means at command to enter into such discriminations; facts, things, and historical personages, are employed but as materials for composing pictures susceptible of giving pleasure; art must, in all subjects, be elevated to such a distance as to lose sight of the discordancy of their accessaries. Through it, personages must be again indued with unity of character, actions with simplicity of purpose, and passions with uniformity of impulse; and, in this re-composition, all the springs of the scenic action, which usually remain concealed on the theatre of the world, must be openly displayed.

Now the poet can only attain this end by sacrificing all the mere details of history, and by generalizing whatever history particularizes, thus giving to everything a conventional existence consistent with imitation, and with the nature of

actions which must be completed (by virtue of imitative fiction) without the aid of time, and the natural springs that set in motion human affairs.

Since it is by the art of generalizing that things, and the notions of things, are reduced to their principle, and their elements, and that, by simplifying them through the suppression of details and subordinate notions, their value and extent are rendered more evident to the mind, it will be readily understood how important to the poet it is, that the expression of the characters of his personages should be subjected to that operation.

The most interesting subjects to deal with are the characters of men, as seen in the course of political affairs and interests. The image that sets before us the scene of events must thoroughly lay bare the prime mover of them, while it is also necessary that they should pass rapidly in review. The first care of the poet is then to disengage this prime mover from the accessory agents that would otherwise clog the movements of the dramatic machine; and it is owing to the effect of this operation that the characters of personages acquire a degree of freedom, perspicuity, and force, that can never be found in the reality.

While deviating on this, as on many other points, from strict adherence to the letter of history, the poet is content to be faithful to its spirit; any more close conformity with fact or reality would be a betrayal on his part, of the general

truth to which alone he ought to incline, it being that of imitation. When he generalizes the traits that compose the moral physiognomy of his personages, he does no more than we see the statuary do, when obliged to suppress the details of bodies, in order the better to display their characteristic forms, or when the character of the subject requires him, by a judicious exaggeration, to bring the nature of his hero into relation with the energy of the act he is performing. Hercules, therefore, when represented as choaking the Nemæan lion, must be endowed with an ideal muscularity of strength.

The more thoroughly it is understood that the operation of generalizing is one of the chief conventions of imitation, which the very nature of things imposes on the artist, the firmer must the conviction become that, in employing this mean, it is highly necessary to be well acquainted with its consequences. One is led to believe that many errors have arisen from a want of knowing the proper scope and tendency of this convention. Now one of the first conditions imposed on the artist is, that he should not draw back at will, that he should not belie in one part of a work, the system he had adopted in another.

How many defects of harmony, how many discrepancies, the causes of which we frequently know not in what way to explain, may be justly ascribed to ignorance, on the part of the artist, as

to the consequences which, unknown to himself, he has brought about.

I think that the controversy continually going on respecting the two forms of composition in the drama, one of which I term regular, the other irregular, would never have taken place, had it been sufficiently understood that those of the latter class, namely, such as are in the manner of Shakspeare, are but a monstrous combination of two incompatible kinds of imitation, of two contrary principles. For while we find, in such like theatrical pieces, the system of generalization carried to the highest point with regard to the characters, the expression of the passions, and the moral purpose of the subject, we find the contrary proceeding pushed to the very extreme, which tends to particularize the action by burlesque incidents, and personages, by low and trivial dialogue, and the total effect by a patchwork of petty details unworthy every species of imitation.

We can never believe that Shakspeare purposely produced results so unbefitting, or that such unseemly conjunctions arose from system and reflective study. Genius, on the one hand, conducted him to the sublime; ignorance of art, its nature, its end, and its means, (that is, its theory,) impelled him, on the other, by force of an, at that time, irresistible bias, to those digressions which have since, by a far less excuseable

error in judgment, been endeavoured to be legitimized and constituted a new style; as though the false could ever be adopted as such, or be other than the negation of truth.

When we consider the works of imitation under the two relations which are forced upon us by an investigation of their theory, we cannot but perceive that the same thing that would shock the reason and the sight in one art, cannot be admitted as legitimate and natural in another. Who would not be disgusted to see, in the arts of design, a like incongruous fusion of that mode of imitation which particularizes even to the expressing the most vulgar objects in detail, with that other mode of generalized imitation, which purifies all subjects, and raises their images into the regions of the ideal? Who, we repeat, could, in that case, endure the combination in one collective whole, of such contrasts as are to be found, side by side, in the scenic representations of Shakspeare?

Though there are poems of a free and burlesque nature which derive from these very contrasts the humorous effect that such opposites are fitted to give rise to, yet one would compare such works to the pictorial whims, which, flowing from an ingenious pencil, are merely intended for our amusement. What can we conclude but that it is the nature of parody to exceed nature, as all monstrosities or caricatures invariably do?

Imitation, like nature, has its exceptions, which, as such, and from the very circumstance of their being exceptions, confirm the rule. Now the first rule of all imitation is that unity of the form or style of composition be observed throughout the same work. And this unity must be more especially preserved by a strict adherence to the conventions adopted.

By the chief of these is determined the rank that the subject holds, whether it ought to be classed as belonging to positive and particularized, or to ideal and generalized imitation.

There is no work of whatever kind, let its standard appear ever so low, in which the ideal may not be attempted with propriety, and which does not afford room for the error tending to confound the elements of the two degrees of imitation.

But few, for instance, are aware that the Fable belongs to the ideal, on account of the fiction and transposal that constitute it, although its personages are most commonly derived from the animal kingdom. It is not the greater or less importance of the beings brought on the scene, that authorizes, or not, the employment of the ideal. The Fable is ideal because it is an imaginative convention, which does not consist in degrading to the level of the animal, the being whose place is supplied by it, but, on the contrary, in raising the animal to the level of man. Now, we depart from the spirit of this convention,

when we endow the fictitious personages of this description of drama with too marked an individuality, either by adhering closely to minor zoological details, or by graphic descriptions, which are apt to present to the imagination the real being instead of the intended fiction of the part. Whatever charm is to be found in the conceptions of the French fabulist,* it must be acknowledged that he has frequently, by his execution, deprived the fable of its ideal investiture.

* La Fontaine.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE ACT OF GENERALIZING IN THE WORKS OF THE ARTS
OF DESIGN.—AND IN THE IMITATION OF THE HUMAN BODY.

THE act of generalizing considered as an operation of the understanding, is very much of the same nature with those, to analyse the elements and develop the notions of which, is the part of metaphysics. Metaphysical science is chiefly the science of the operations of the mind: there is therefore nothing to be wondered at, when we find it appealed to as a necessary and definitive judge, in a number of questions that arise, both on the conception, and on the means of execution, of those works of art where the imitation is especially addressed to the mind. But where the question concerns those arts in which the forms of bodies and matter are employed, many persons seem to think that because their impressions are received by the senses, such arts may be exempted from the tribunal of metaphysics, as though the impressions of the senses could be explained, even materially, without recourse to the moral sciences.

I admit that the investigation of the operations of the understanding in generalizing, has hitherto been but little attended to in the theory of the arts of design.* But it is because that theory has been itself but little generalized. Critical observations are usually confined to the isolated circle of each of the fine arts separately. By a more comprehensive study, including them all, we come to perceive that they have a common principle, and certain general laws, whence, in each separate mode of imitation, a similar action arises, differing only according as the organs to which they are addressed, are different. We see then clearly that the generalizing action is the same in the works of the arts of design, as in those of the arts of poetry. Without question it belongs to the same operation of the understanding to generalize forms as ideas, the images of bodies as the conceptions of the mind, the representation of material objects as the expression of thoughts and the relations of the moral world.

- generalizing from nature

* In a periodical work † (*les Archives Littéraires*) eighteen years ago we gave, in a series of articles, an essay on this theory, in which we maintained that the ideal consisted mainly in the art of generalizing.

† The present matured and all-comprehensive theory is the result of the mental labour and experience of more than eighteen years. In the articles above alluded to we have the rough materials and model of what is here built up and elaborated into a perfect and finished edifice. Some of the chapters of this essay either contain the substance or are verbatim transcripts of those papers.—*Translator.*

The act of generalizing proceeds from one of the innate or instinctive faculties of our minds, and we scarcely utter a sentence without having recourse to it. Language exists only in abstractions, that is, in generalized ideas. The artist also, of necessity, and frequently without being aware of it, brings into play, in his language expressed by forms, a process which is as much that of instinct as of the understanding; and it has been already remarked (Part II. Chap. x.) that, in the earliest period of art, imitation by signs was a species of ideal, in as much as it had to do with images of a most abstracted kind. Consequently while we have an ideal in poetry, there is also an ideal which may be termed that of writing, whether by words or emblems. The latter has been here mentioned only with a view the better to characterize the former. We have also deemed it needless to remark that if, in the fine arts, all poetical ideality results from the act of generalizing, every operation that generalizes does not reciprocally produce the ideal, according to the meaning of the word poetical as applied to the fine arts.

Be it as it may, the act of generalizing, applied to the arts of design, is concerned as well in the composition of subjects, as in the representation of the human body.

As regards composition, the end to be kept in view, equally as in the conceptions of the poet, is

to reduce the most extensive and intricate subjects to the simplest, and, at the same time, most forcible expression they will admit of. Force and simplicity must not here be separated. The true value of every thought lies no doubt in its simplicity; but be it understood that it is this very simplicity that renders the thought more forcible.

Painting, like language, is capable of expressing, by a small number of figures, what many would only serve to weaken. It has, moreover, its laconicism of form, as the poetry of language, that of words in those celebrated axioms deemed to be epitomies of the wisdom of ages. What but a summary of a theological treatise in painting, is that composition of Raffaello, in which religion, elevated above the clouds, is seen pointing towards the earth, and indicating that the book which she holds closed in her hand, being that of the knowledge of divine things, is sealed from the curiosity of mortals?

If the property of reducing all things to the fewest terms, and by the most simple means, is one of the springs of that poetical action which generalizes the conceptions of the writer, it will in the same sense appertain to the compositions of the painter, and will produce in them the same effects. It is not meant that the manner adopted by the poet in generalizing his conception, can be followed by the painter desirous of treating the same subject. The parity here spoken of con-

Pre-empt a condensation from nature

sists in means, force, and effect, and must be considered as part of a system, and not in respect to particular applications. We shall hereafter show more at length, that as the act of generalizing is allied to that of transforming, every art has a class of abstractions and metaphors inherent to its own mechanism, and which can in no wise be transferred to another.

What we maintain is, that this operation, by means of which the painter is enabled to concentrate in the smallest number of traits, for the eye, what the poet condenses into the smallest number of ideas for the mind, is used in every art after its own peculiar manner, and is under such circumstances rightly so used. If the infinite power of the Creator is aptly rendered by the sublime conciseness of the words, *fiat lux*, which generalize the idea of it, the painter who has represented the Almighty dispersing chaos, has repeated the same thought to the eye in another manner; and the simplicity of that composition serves to display with the same energy of expression, the omnipotence evinced in the creation.

Many similar instances might be adduced, but the reader will find no difficulty in supplying them for himself. These few hints are I think sufficient to characterize the operation of the mind which is essential in almost every composition, apart from the more or less successful result dependent on the degree of talent or genius in the

artist. For, as already remarked, the operation in question is much more obligatory than it is usually thought to be, in so much that genius does not always consist in generalizing, but in deriving from that operation, those beautiful effects so justly admired in the great masters; that is, those parts which, simple in composition, and rich in thought, are rendered equivalent, by a judicious and ingenious abridgment, to a collective whole, which, if taken in all its entireness, would exceed the bounds of art.

The painter then is enabled in two ways to generalize subjects the most abundant in particulars, that is, to refer them to the simple expression of a single aspect, which shall prove a fertile source to sentiment or imagination. At one time he exchanges the physical and material effect of the scene, for the moral impression of certain situations, which serve the beholder as interpreters of what his eye cannot inform him of; at another, he augments the effect of the scene by the actual suppression of details, which would too much divide the attention.

Two great painters have each treated, according to one and the other of these two systems of generalization, one of those scenes whose variety and vastness would seem to require the greatest multiplicity of effects, details, and particularities.

Raffaello has painted a conflagration. Fire, flames, and smoke form the least part of his pic-

ture. But we see instead what is undoubtedly far better; namely, the expression of the most touching circumstances; an old man borne away from the midst of the flames by his son; a young man escaping over a wall from the heat of the conflagration; and a mother who, from the top of that same wall, is about to throw her son into the cradle held below by the father, who is raising himself on tiptoe to receive it. The child is about to fall — Will it be caught? — Thus the painter instead of a display fitted to produce, on the sight, the physical effects of the conflagration, places before us, in the various positions, and different ages of his personages, the moral image of all the terrors that such a fearful scourge could occasion.

In a scene of a different nature, than which there is none more vast, the universal deluge, Nicholas Poussin has shown us how genius, which simplifies by generalizing, can endue a small number of objects with such infinite power, as to compel the imagination and the sentiment to restore to the image, what want of space has prevented him from portraying. For, how would the painter render the deluge in its universal whole, the *Omnia pontus erant*?* — Others have believed that they could comply with the spirit of so extensive a subject by multiplying its episodes

* Ovid, *Metamorph.*, lib. i. l. 292.

and every kind of form under which death and destruction could reach its victims. Here is Pousin's picture. "A sky, which the lightning pierces with difficulty, lowers over the waters; a darkened sun; a vessel in which a few human beings are struggling against the waves, a tree, a rock, a reptile, the only remnants of the kingdoms of nature, with the last family breathing out the last gasp of human kind."*

This brief description is well fitted to give an idea of the kind of convention, by means of which scenes the most considerable may be reduced within the circumscribed limits of every art, and disengaged from their detail without losing their intrinsic value. We may aver even, that it is precisely this kind of concentration that augments their force and energy. The sequel will show in what manner the act of generalizing subjects and compositions, is found to be allied to another act, that of transforming or transposing. (See Chapters vii. and ix.)

The act of generalizing, and its effect, may be more easily comprehended in what is termed composition, and in those cases where the artist, frequently obliged to cast aside the details that would otherwise overload and obscure the principal action, generalizes, without knowing it, when

* On one of the distinguishing Operations of Genius, by M. Guerin.

he brings out either the chief point of view in a subject, its cause, or its consequence. All these operations take place in passing from the compound to the simple, and in referring all ideas of a subject to one principal idea comprehending the details, (as the genus comprehends the species.)

But greater difficulty is experienced in conceiving, and rendering an account of the same operation as regards the imitation, properly so called, of the human body. In it the subject for imitation appears simple. In it also the model is presented as a whole, that is easily comprehended and defined. Yet this whole is a compound of parts, and the individual, as already remarked, is far from furnishing, in all those parts, that complete harmony of which corporeal beauty is the result. The artist is therefore obliged to subject all the forms of the individual to a critical comparison, founded on a knowledge of the type of absolute perfection. Hence we find that the operation of generalizing is here also to be brought into play. Moreover, be the object about which it is concerned what it may, its action is ever the same, since it mainly consists in referring every idea, as well as every particular image, to its generating principle, to its own peculiar type or genus.

Pol. vs. the IDEAL

The instance already deduced from the idea of portraiture, that is, of the particularized image, will serve as a parallel to show what the generalized

image is. Place a *portrait-head** in opposition to one of Grecian sculpture representing a divinity. (See Part II., Chap. xi.) It will be sufficient to recall attention to the characteristic traits there described.† Is it not true that so great a difference exists between these two heads, that the least experienced eye could never mistake them? Is it not certain that the most beautiful *portrait-head* would be found to be wholly in discordance with the body, (were one desirous of such a transfer,) either of an antique Apollo, or Venus? Every one must allow that the same would be the case with the head of an antique Venus, or Apollo, on the body of a statue in the modern style, that is, as before remarked, in strict accordance with the natural model. (Part II. Chap. xi.) Whence can this discordance arise, unless it is that each work proceeds from one of two opposite and irreconcilable systems?

In what then do these two manners of imitating the human body consist, and whence arises their

* The *statua iconica* of Pliny, *simulacrum iconicum* of Suetonius.—*Translator*.

† It must be recollected that all the elements of minute imitation are suppressed. The hair of the eye-brow is not rendered apparent, in order to allow of the arch of the eye being better defined. The ball of the eye has no pupil, the nose is of an angular form, the hair and beard are disposed in factitious and formal masses. The whole is fashioned agreeably to perfect symmetry, and the entire contour is divested of those accidental details which, in the individual, interrupt its regularity, &c.

difference? In the one every part of the body, every form, every muscle is imitated with all the irregularities of detail, all the accidental particulars, that, owing to the chances of generation, and numberless other causes, are present in all bodies. It is no uncommon case to find the

bones and muscles deformed, altered, and modified from their natural condition, by the skin, the cellular tissue, or the more or less degree of corpulency in the individual. Again, who is not aware that the relations one with another of all the parts of the body, from which result the beauty and harmony of proportions, are dependent on an infinity of causes and circumstances tending to impede or modify their development? Nothing in the imitation of the human body is more common than that manner which consists in reproducing its forms, peculiarities, proportions, and relations, just as they occur to the artist in the individual model. It is imitation after the idea of portraiture.

II The other manner has been already described and analysed, (Part II. Chap. xi.) and I shall the less stop here to point out the difference existing between the two, because it is of itself announced, as well to the mind, as to the sight, by an indubitable opposition in style.

In examining what is so legibly written before the eye, in statues of the ancient style, are we not obliged to confess that there is in them a cer-

tain grandeur of form that excludes all accidental littleness, and that a judicious combination of relations between the several parts produces a concord of proportions, seemingly constituting the rule by which the Creator appointed human nature, before it was subjected to the accidents that generation, labour, poverty, and sickness, have rendered it liable to ?

What style of imitation then is that, which offers us precisely the contrary to the one in which the forms are designed, and the proportions copied, in the spirit of portraiture, unless it be that which generalizes the form and proportion of the human body, and by virtue of which the whole is found to be carried beyond the particular existence of the individual, to the abstract existence of the species and genus ?

But the figure of man thus generalized, we have already (Part II. Chap. xi.) found to possess the qualifications of an ideal figure.

Hence then it is certain that, in theory, *ideal*, and *generalized*, are to a certain extent synonymous, because they express the same effect, although the analysis of these two notions proves to us that the one is derived from the other, and that the act of generalizing is undeniably employed by the mind of the imitator as a means to attain to the ideal.

Thus there is a poetical convention, in virtue of which the artist also, in imitating the human

body, recomposes whatever has served him for a model. And this recombination cannot take place, unless by the same proceeding as that adopted in the other arts. The import of which is, that, as regards design, the form of the individual model, necessarily imperfect, must be generalized by a knowledge of the abstract model, which is the very type of the perfection of bodies, or, in other words, the law of nature.

Now this type of corporeal perfection (although it is a question of corporeity and matter) is not a being that can be somewhere found individually, that can be separately apprehended by the physical organ alone. It is a compound being, the several parts of which are brought together by observation and experience, by the imagination and sentiment. This type of perfection is, to the imitation of the physical man, what, to the arts of immaterial imitation embracing the moral world, are both that standard of the beautiful and true by which the poet traces the characters of his personages, and that knowledge of our minds, by which he measures the effect of the passions, of their expression, and of the sensations we receive from them.

The physical organ undoubtedly has a share in all imitation, and it cannot be denied but that the senses are called upon to gather together a great number of observations to serve for the advantage of art. We do not therefore maintain that, in the

generalized imitation of the human body, every thing should be exclusively the result of intellectual means. It is, without doubt, on bodies that observation is exercised, and that by the aid of the eye. But the question is, to know what it is that enlightens the observer in his investigations, and directs the operation of the sight.

Now, when we would give an account of the kind of observation, of the nature of the operation, and of its result in the works of art, we are obliged to confess that this governing type of the forms of the human body, this general model proposed to imitation, is naught else than a system, or, if it be preferred, a science, the object of which is an acquaintance with the general causes from which the rule of human conformation is derived, the principles of the organization of each member in relation to its end, and the laws of that harmony which is common to all the works of the Creator.

Such being the elements of the knowledge that forms the rule or type of the imitation of the human body, it must be admitted that they are neither so palpable nor so visible to the eyes of the body only, as is sometimes imagined, when, by an explanation referring too much to matter, the whole is reduced to the action of the external sense.

In order to explain the term ideal, in the imitation of the human body, recourse has very com-

monly been had to certain, modes of procedure which would seem to reduce the operation of the artist to something positive or practical. I trust to be able to show that those explanations are actually nothing more than forms of speech, their effect being to substitute certain definitions, which would seem to be more readily appreciable by the senses, for the almost indefinable action of the understanding and the imagination. (See the following Chapter.)

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE TWO CUSTOMARY PHRASES *CHOICE OF FORMS* AND
UNION OF SCATTERED BEAUTIES.—AN ANALYSIS OF
THOSE TWO NOTIONS.

WE have already had occasion to speak of the mistakes that arise in the employment of the word *ideal*, (see Part II. Chap. v.) more especially when applied to works of art. One of those mistakes consists in restricting the notion of it to corporeal *beauty*. The generality of persons commit another by considering the ideal as exclusively related to the works of the arts of design and the forms of the human body. Hence certain restrictive systems tending to explain the ideal style, the operations on which it is dependent, and the effects that result from it, by means apparently subordinate to the senses and by notions of absolute, and, in some measure, practical processes.

The inadequacy of these explanations cannot be better evinced than by showing that the ideal belongs as much to the conceptions of the art of the poet as to the inventions of the arts of design.

The definition of the operations of which it is the result must then be rendered capable of application to works wholly dependent on mind as well as to those in which art is exercised on matter or bodies.

This I have endeavoured to render intelligible in the two preceding chapters, where I have shown that the same effect is produced in both kinds of art, by the same faculty of the mind, by the same act of generalizing.

All that is requisite to complete the proof is, to show that the two ways above alluded to, of explaining the operation of the ideal, as some are accustomed to conceive and express it with regard to the arts of design, are nothing more than an interpretation of the act of generalizing, or a circumlocutory mode of expressing that intellectual process. If in the sequel I am enabled to prove that the two modes of procedure proposed to be substituted for it are of necessity employed by the poet equally with the painter, it must be acknowledged that the operation of the ideal in the imitation of bodies is very far from being subject, as the explanation given of it would lead one to understand, to the power of the senses alone, to the sole action of absolute and physical labour.

These two modes of procedure by which some have imagined that they could explain in a more sensible, and in some sort, materialized manner, the operation of the ideal in the works of art,

*This is what Powers
does - the Greek?*

in you more precise, down to earth, etc.

consist, say they, in the act of choosing on the one hand, and in that of uniting on the other; and this they term a choice of forms and union of scattered beauties.

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We will now endeavour to give some account of what is meant by these two terms.

✓ As regards the term choice of forms, it is certain that when all the parts of a figure in the ideal style are duly estimated and it is compared with a figure executed in the style of individual imitation, that the notion of chosen forms is sufficiently expressive of the effect of the former. With regard to the latter, however, there evidently can have been no room for the choice spoken of.

Thus the idea that is given rise to by the ideal style in a figure, is well enough represented by the words choice of forms. This phrase is only a metaphorical way of expressing an act which is far less sensible and material than it is usually thought to be. In fact, what is here called choosing, which would appear as though it were a simple and easy operation, when it comes to be analysed compels us to refer the idea of it to that of comparing, and the act which succeeds it to that of judging. Of a certainty to choose is to judge which among several things is the best or the worst.

✓ But in order to judge what is the best, it is necessary first of all to possess a knowledge of it. Now, if in order to select the beautiful, it is ne-

✓
cessary to have already found it, (for to know it
is to have found it,) ~~how are we to understand an~~
operation which, in order to choose, that is to
judge of, what is the best, requires a previous
operation that has already made known to the
artist what he is in search of.

It is evident that this notion when taken in its absolute sense revolves in a circle, because as already stated, (Part II. Chap. vii.) in order to judge, some rule or law is necessary as a point of comparison. Now since to choose is to judge, where, we ask, is the rule by which the artist decides, which among the forms of the human body are good, which the best, and which the worst?

We have already explained, (see Part II. Chapters vi. and x.,) how in ancient times this rule came to be formed, what were the causes that induced its being sought out, and the means that led to its discovery; we have also shown that this law or rule of judgment in the act of choosing was a knowledge of the principles of the organization of the human body, an acquaintance with the general laws of nature.

It seems to follow as a result of what we have unfolded in our theoretical and historical disquisitions on this subject that the above mentioned *choice of forms*, whether understood generally or in its partial application to the execution of some stated work, was not formerly, any more

than it can be now-a-days, the isolated production of a single artist, the result of individual labour. Mere common sense tells us that this choice, by which the means and the effect of the ideal are attempted to be explained, did not depend, in every separate figure, on the chance whether the artist was more or less fortunate in his survey of the models within his reach, nor on that of the judgments he might form in comparing the numerous parts required to compose a whole.

The idea of *choice* as necessarily belonging to a system, evidently comes within the operation of taste, intellect, and genius, and this operation which is sought to be withdrawn from the moral principle, rejects on the contrary, far more than is believed, all practical explanation, more especially when attempted in particulars.

What indeed is meant by this *choice*, which in the habitual practice of the art ought to be the result arrived at by the artist from an actual confrontation of all descriptions of bodies, and forms and parts of bodies?

Is it meant that the artist can neither produce nor even conceive the figure he has to execute, but by actually confronting as many models or individuals as would be necessary, in order that he may be certain that he has found enough from which to complete his choice of excellence in every part and detail? If we for a moment assume it thus, and are willing to allow that such

only should be the case, it is in good earnest, merely that we may point out how ridiculous would be so diligent a search after models through all time and in all countries, but, more especially, amid our manners and the physical and moral states of society. What a singular idea would be formed of the arts of design and their imitation, if the success of works was made to depend on a fortuitous concurrence of models appropriate to the subject to be treated!

Is it meant that in this operation of *choice*, the artist may (as is most frequently the case) be limited to a single model, but on condition that he do not wholly conform to it, that is, by taking only the beautiful parts, and supplying whatever he may find to be less beautiful, or defective. It is clear, by this hypothesis, that as the artist puts such operation in force with but a single individual in view, he must, therefore, confront the forms of the body before him with those of other bodies that he does not see, and which are called up by his memory or his imagination. Such being the case, the operation of the aforesaid choice ceases to be a materialized and sensible act, and can no longer be termed a real or actual comparison. It falls necessarily within the sphere of the operation of the understanding, or the imagination.

In whatever way the act of choosing may be explained, it must always proceed from a know-

ledge of what constitutes beauty and perfection in the forms of the body. Now this knowledge is, in theory and in practice, the generating principle of the ideal. The idea of *choice* in its application to the imitation of corporeal forms, is, therefore, but a figurative way of expressing the operation, by which the artist renders the knowledge he has acquired in this part of imitation available. This operation is, consequently, allied to the mind yet more than to the senses, which serve it for agents.

I now come to the other mode of procedure, by which some have pretended to explain the operation of the ideal as dependent on the physical action of the senses, and which they term the *union of scattered beauties*.

Ideal beauty, say they, is the union of beauties of form partially distributed over several individuals in nature, but collected together and assembled in a single figure by art.

Nothing can be more true than this explanation, if it is to be understood as confined within the bounds of an abstract definition. As on the one hand there is neither beauty nor perfection which does not belong in detail to nature, and as it is certain that the artists cannot (without absurdity) be supposed to find any thing beyond nature; so also on the other, no individual can be found completely beautiful and perfect as relates to art, and if the power of imitation is equal to supply what

is wanting to this perfection, it is certain that the resulting work will present an union of beauties no where existent but as shared in different degrees by all living beings.

This fact admitted, how did art attain to it? Reason and history alike tell us that no such result could in ancient times have been produced by any particular operation due to the unconnected efforts of each individual artist. It is evident how impossible it must be that he should have at his disposal the collection of models necessary to attain such a union; and, moreover, the facts themselves demonstrate that it was the work of time, of experience, of many successive trials, and of an infinity of observations constantly referred for study and combination to a common centre, whence arose that knowledge of the ideal which the Greeks have transmitted down to us.

In this way we may suppose a recomposition of the forms of the individual, according to the character of the subject, and in accordance with the laws of nature, to have been brought about in the beautiful works of ancient art, and not an accidental union of parts borrowed by this or that artist from several models either chosen or afforded by chance. Now an operation of this kind cannot but be the result of system. And every one to this day, without taking account of the direction his mind is pursuing, appropriates this system, as wrought out in its principles, its conse-

quences, and the examples that illustrate it, and attains more or less nearly to the desired end, according to the measure of his talent and intellect.

There are, I grant, certain critics who do not thus understand it. (What they term the *union of scattered beauties*, is in their opinion a very common and purely practical operation, within the reach of every one, and by means of which ideal beauty is attained.) According to them this union ought to be explained in its literal and absolute sense. It ought to be a veritable aggregate of detached parts, borrowed from different individuals or actual models, one furnishing the beauty that is partially wanting in another.

On the contrary, it seems to us that it is precisely this way of explaining the thing in a material light that exposes the error of the explanation, by revealing the impossibility entailed in the execution.

Since the union in question is no longer to be considered as the effect of a theoretical system and as emanating, in the practical use made of it by the artist, from the intellectual faculty, but rather as a positive operation, I ask if it has been well considered whether the putting it into execution is so much as physically possible.

Supposing that the artist had at his disposal as many chosen models as there are parts in the human body, does any one imagine that he could, by imitating a part of each model, compose one

Exactly what P. does to an extent.

homogeneous figure from their assemblage. Is it at all intelligible how, in case of his proceeding by this system of division, he could attain to that unity of forms, character, and proportion, which is the primary condition of beauty? How could true harmony be diffused over so numerous a collection of discrepancies?

Let not what is reported concerning the five models of Zeuxis be here brought forward as an objection.* That story is, perhaps, only an apt

* We have already taken occasion (Part II. Chap. iv.) to raise some doubts as to the story of the five models, said to have been employed by Zeuxis for the formation of a perfect beauty. There are two things to be considered in this anecdote, which is differently reported by different authors: the fact in itself, and the theoretical notion attached to it.

As regards the fact, its reality can be neither proved nor disputed. We frequently find it the case that the same subject is reported in several ways, and this is always more likely to occur when the opinion for which it serves as a ground, is of a nature to be brought forward at all times, and in all places.

We find the elements both of the fact in question, and of the opinion which might have suggested its narration, in the dialogue where Xenophon introduces Socrates as conversing with the painter Parrhasius (Xenoph. *Memorabilia*, lib. iv. ch. x.) the painter agreeing that as no single model can be found of completely perfect conformation, when a beautiful figure is desired, it is necessary to unite in one body the most beautiful parts of several. Now Parrhasius and Zeuxis were contemporaries.

The fact of the five models of Zeuxis is, perhaps, but the doctrine of Parrhasius converted into a fable. I say fable, because nothing is more natural than that a story should be

allegory of the ideal union which the true theory and practice of art alike inculcate. When Lucian, in order to describe the beauty of Panthea, brings together, in order to compose her portrait, the separate parts that were most vaunted in the Sosandra of Calamis, the Lemnian of Phidias, the Venus of Praxiteles, and in that of Alcamenes, it is only a hyperbolical simile of the author. Devoid of means to make the image of corporeal beauty sensible to the eye, he has recourse to this imaginary assemblage in order to compel the reader to raise within himself the idea of a com-

founded on any one of the dicta of the schools, in order, by mingling the true with the imaginary, to give consistence to a merely theoretical notion. Thus we find different versions of this story. According to Pliny, the circumstances occurred at Agrigentum, on the picture of Helen which he destined for the temple of Juno Lacinia. Dionysius of Halicarnassus relates the same fact; but according to him it took place at Crotona. Cicero assigns this anecdote to the same city, and enters into some particulars which evince to us what great facilities the Greeks possessed for drawing the parallels so requisite to a knowledge of the ideal in the imitation of the human body.

The least dubious consequences resulting from these different accounts, are, on the one hand, the doctrine of the imperfection of individual models; on the other, the theory of the art of generalizing, an operation of the understanding, although the mind in order to render its combined and systematic workings intelligible in language, is compelled to borrow from matter the idea of a union and assemblage of parts, an idea which has too often been taken in the sense of absolute reality, and, so taken, may have given rise to the story of the five models of Zeuxis.

plete beauty, by the remembrance of several others particularly beautiful. But Lucian, like the sculptor, (and he had been one in his youth) would have refrained from realizing in any one single figure, that actual union of the beautiful parts of several different statues, which he invites his readers to assort together in a mental composition.

A whole thus made up of different parts as understood in a matter-of-fact and rigorous sense would be but a mass of discordances. ~~The beauty of every part of a whole, immeasurably depends on the relations uniting it to that whole, which relations can never be transferred along with the part when separated from its collective whole.~~ It would be very possible to make a most ridiculous figure from a number of beautiful parts taken from as many different figures, even though they were copied with the greatest exactitude. The truth is, that a beautiful figure must be conceived, imagined, and composed for itself alone, apart from all others, and this should be done without the aid of any union understood as actual and real. Otherwise it would be but an assemblage of beautiful fragments

When the painter Eupompus said, in answer to the sculptor Lysippus, that the model he ought to follow was the multitude, and that by so doing he might learn to imitate nature, *dixisse demonstrata hominum multitudine, naturam ipsam imitandam esse* (Plin. l. 34.), he certainly did not mean that the

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artist ought to take each individual of the multitude as a model for any proposed work, that is, by choosing as many separate persons as his figure has parts (for what limit would there be to the number?) Eupompus meant, firstly, that the artist should study his art in the works of nature, rather than in those of artists and of his masters: secondly, that he ought, like them, to study nature in the greatest possible number of individuals. In fact, the question mooted by Lysippus in the above passage, does not concern any particular figure but, generally, the course of study to be followed. Now we repeat that it was by this kind of study, so easily attainable in Greece, that ideal perfection in art was attained. (Eupompus, therefore, revealed to Lysippus the secret, and taught him, in a few words, the means by which to generalize imitation.)

We cannot then admit as really applicable to the practice of imitation any actual union of parts taken, that is, copied, from different individuals in order to compose one figure. It is very true that we see the artist after he has conceived, invented, and determined on, the style, character, form, and entire aspect of a figure, set himself to observe and compare different parts of models, which may appear to him congenial with those of the being he is about to represent, in order to guide him in the details, and in the practical or executive department, of imitation. The artist

will undoubtedly make use of several models, but not in imagining his figure ; that already exists, and ought to exist, whole and entire in his imagination ; and thus *a choice and union* has already in idea been brought about by his mind. Without that, the models he might resort to in order to aid him in his creation, would be fitted only to impede his endeavours by their differences. A new proof that the greater part of those operations is wholly intellectual, and rather serves to explain the ways of proceeding in practice, than allows of explanation by them.

We may go yet farther and ask, what the artist does when, in the execution of what he has conceived, he makes use of several models ? Does he copy exactly, does he unite in a faithful imitation the parts he has chosen from each just as they are seen in reality, and so that the originals may be rediscovered in their copies ? Certainly not ; the artist seeks in his models, truths of which the living being is the only source of inspiration, he looks to them for points of detail and form, for relative proportions, and for the impressions of sentiment, motion, harmony, and partial beauties, which he assimilates to the type his imagination has already formed. But he does it by a process that baffles all analysis. Who can say whether he transforms the substance of what he has conceived into that of what he sees, or whether the contrary.

Very frequently both is the case, but the nature of this operation, so difficult to describe in words, is such, that when a work is finished, the artist may frequently point to the models he has made use of without our being able to recognize wherein he has imitated them. So true is this, that were the same models imitated by another, in the same subject figure, the result would afford other forms, other unions of parts, and other effects of tint and colour. This is a consequence of that elaborating process by which every one transforms what he imagines into what he sees, and what he sees into that which he imagines, as, in another order of things, is the case with the physical assimilations proceeding from the natural operation of the digestive organs, and which no theory is fully capable of analyzing. Here in like manner metaphysical analysis is at fault.

When the artist sees in imagination the figure which it is his wish, though at the same time he despairs of being able, to execute, what does he require in order to realize it as promptly and as completely as it has been created in thought? What but a means of execution as rapid. Time is, however, of no importance; what matter though Phidias were years in embodying his ideal of Jupiter? If he had not from the very first conceived it as a whole, if he had not formed it in idea, if he had not seen it *velut tonantem*, all the so pretended positive ways of proceeding by

~~choice of form and union of beauties, could never have suggested to him its majestic aspect, nor enabled him to execute its sublime composition.~~

It is then consistent with truth to say with Cicero, (see Part II. Chap. xii.) that the artist, besides all those means which are as it were the material instruments of imitation, (and among these is the model before his eyes,) ought to have an internal model by which to direct his art and his hand, *qui artem manumque dirigat*, and to which his mind's eye turns, *quem intuens in eaque defixus*, in order to realize that ideal perfection which is the end of imitation.

We have already shown that this internal model, as explained by theoretical analysis, must be the result of observations, comparisons, and combinations of every kind, on which the knowledge of the imitation of the human body is founded. But this knowledge, because applied to bodies, was not, in its acquirement, and is not, in its communication, the less subjected to the full action of the understanding. Determined of old by genius, it cannot in this our day be learnt, nor can it produce its effects, but through the rarest faculties of the mind and the most refined sources of sentiment.

It is then clear that what is termed *a choice of forms and union of beauties* when applied to the ~~imitated configuration of the human body, is~~ necessary to the recomposition of the individual

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model as a means for generalizing its form, ~~sub-~~
~~jected however to the action of the understanding~~
~~far more than to that of the senses and of practical~~
~~execution.~~

Such being the case, it rests as certain, that
 these two phrases are, like many others, forms of
 speech borrowed from sensible objects, the better
 to render intelligible the operation that generalizes
~~the imitation of the human body, that is, leads~~
~~from the study of the individual to that of the~~
~~genus, and from the expression of particular to~~
~~the character of universal beauty.~~

We have already stated in the beginning of this
 chapter, that one reason why so absolute a signi-
 fication as that in which some consider it, should
 not be given to these two customary phrases in
 the exercise of the arts of design, is the use that
 may be and indeed is made of them in applying
 them to the arts of poetry. If, in fact, the ope-
 ration of *choosing* and of *uniting* belongs equally to
 the poet as to the painter, with this difference,
 that the objects which the former has for *choice*
 and *union* exist for the most part in the moral
 order of things and are accessible only to the
 mind, this simple parallel will sufficiently prove
 that the act of *choosing* and of *uniting* is an act
 peculiar to the understanding, and tends also to
 generalize the subjects of poetical imitation.

As regards the operation of *choosing*, there is
 certainly as much difference between the beings

or objects of the moral world, as between those of the world of matter, and, consequently, a like obligation on the poet to draw parallels and comparisons, without the concurrence of any positive standard or any material process.

When, for instance, he has to bring upon the stage personages of every condition, age, country, and character, and to make them think, act, and speak, when he has to depict the passions which have been the exciting causes of great events, and to give to each the language accordant with it, can any one believe that there is not also in such imitation abundant room for *choice* amongst a multitude of moral figures and forms, varying more perhaps from one another than do the configurations of bodies?

What actual models, what determinate points of comparison are presented to the tragic author? What means has he for embracing in their reality, for studying in the play of their machinery, the springs of interest and intrigue, and their admixture with the mazes of politics? Is it necessary that he should have been present at the struggles of the Forum, the debates of councils, the meetings of conspirators, in order, amid reality itself, to make *choice* of the characters, thoughts, motions, and language with which he has to endue his actors? To argue thus would be preposterous indeed.

Whence then is the poet to make choice of his

models? From the study he has prosecuted into the human heart, from the observations he has collected on the causes and effects of the passions, from reflection on the consequences that experience teaches him to draw from events such as history, ancient or cotemporary, lays open; finally, from the very works in which this branch of imitation has been put in practice with a due employment of the art of generalizing.

The same is the case with that other ideal operation which is equally designated in poetical imitation by the word *union*.

The poet brings together in his personages, and combines into one whole, the traits relating to the character of the passion, vice, or folly he is desirous of expressing. But are we to suppose that each separate trait is borrowed from some actual being either ancient or modern, from some real or historical fact? May not other actions be attributed to Achilles, Agamemnon, or Ulysses, than such as are related of them in well-grounded tradition, or taken from the history of other real warriors? In the subjects of comedy, as the jealous man, the hypocrite, the gambler, is it merely requisite that they should consist of a jumble of ludicrous details, selected and brought together by the poet, but from circumstances of notoriety that may serve to guarantee their authenticity? How then, it will be asked, is the poet to proceed in bringing about this *union*? In the

same manner as that employed by the artist in the composition of his figure?

He studies not this or that individual of the society in which he lives, but the dispositions, the habits, and manners of society in general; human frailties, their first causes, and their effects. Duly qualified by such studies and his own reflections; he traces the picture of human life, less after the portraits of some individuals, than the original character of *man*. The imitation of *man*, in this wise, belongs to all time and to all countries. And while we see the ephemeral images of some particular person, some temporary custom, or some passing folly, disappear from the scene, the paintings of which we speak never become old; because they are in true accordance with nature.

We will not follow out any further on this point, the parallel between the arts of poetry and of design. It is sufficient to have hinted at this uniformity in order to be convinced that as regards the fine arts, *to choose* and *to unite*, far from conveying the idea of a wholly practical operation brought to bear after a material manner on objects, carry with them, on the contrary, the idea of an act of the understanding which admits but of a metaphysical elucidation.

This is even yet more true, whatever may be said to the contrary, of the act of uniting, although it may appear to be more intimately dependent on the senses.

In considering the beautiful works of the ancients, in which the ideal style is so predominant, we become convinced, not only that they are not the isolated imitations of any individual in particular, but they prove to us that neither are they the material and collective imitations of parts absolutely borrowed from several individuals. An artist copying with strict reality, and so composing a figure formed from the dismemberment of several actual models, would in no wise produce a generalized imitation, but would only make a collection of individualities.

In fine, have those who imagine that they can explain ideal imitation in the arts of design by the notion of an absolute union of individual parts, previously chosen and faithfully expressed, have they seen the full extent of their theory? Have they taken account of the parts which would require to be *chosen*, with due relation to the style of the figure, and which must afterwards be *united*? The number of the parts of the human body, as already mentioned, are, so to speak, infinite. Every principal part is composed of lesser parts, which again include others still less; so that it is impossible to see where, in this operation, taken in its absolute and practical sense, the act of *choosing* and *uniting* would terminate.

We come then to the conclusion that the ideal in imitation consists especially in that the works

wherein it resides are not, and cannot be, either the expression of any individual, of any object in particular, nor the union, positively understood, of parts of different objects or individuals.

And, again, that the notions of a *choice* and *union* are truly abstract, that the words expressive of them are but figurative expressions of an operation of the understanding, which in this, as in all other cases, necessarily employs the intervention of the senses.

Hence too, the error in straining the explanation either one way or the other. For, as it would be absurd to maintain that the senses go for nothing in estimating the relations and drawing the parallels requisite to the act of generalizing, so it would be unreasonable to deny the agency of the intellectual and moral faculties, admitting no other agents than the senses and no other combinations than those of a material and physical order.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE ACT OF TRANSFORMING OR TRANSPOSING CONSIDERED
AS A MEANS OF IDEAL IMITATION, BOTH IN THE INVENTIONS
OF POETRY AND THE FORMS OF ITS LANGUAGE.

It has been seen that in order to withdraw the objects and subjects that imitation has to do with, from the region of vulgar realities, and to elevate them into those of the ideal, the poet and the artist are alike under the obligation of recomposing them. (See Chap. iii.)

We have shown that the first means for bringing about this recomposition is the exchanging the particular form and existence of things for a generalized form and existence, and also that the accustomed phrases by which the artist's manner of proceeding in order to attain the ideal are pretended to be defined, are merely figurative expressions purporting to explain, in a more sensible manner, the generalizing operation of the understanding.

In taking account of the act of generalizing, understood as a means adapted for recomposing

the objects and subjects of imitation, one cannot but perceive that this act is intimately linked in with that of transforming or transposing. There is nevertheless a very essential difference between them. In truth, though whatever is generalized undergoes a sort of transformation, yet all that is transformed, is not therefore necessarily generalized; for, the form of an object may also be changed by passing from the order of general images or ideas, to that of particular images or ideas.

Moreover, the act of generalizing seems to be applicable solely to that which constitutes the very nature of beings, the essence of things, the character of persons; in short, to that which changes or modifies them in their individuality; while the act of transforming or transposing embraces, in the operations of the artist who aspires to the ideal, both a greater diversity of points of view and a much greater number of relations. Such, for instance, are all those changes that belong to the composition of subjects, resulting from the accessaries that are conjoined with their personages by associating with them fictious or allegorical beings, and all those imaginative combinations whose effect doubtless contributes to generalize the objects of imitation, though by modes of proceeding wholly distinct, and which it is for theoretical analysis to develop separately.

This second *means of recomposition*, which may

be termed *metaphorical*, will give us occasion to pass in review a much greater number of critical observations, and customary modes of procedure, and those of a much less abstract nature.

We may premise that poetry is nothing more than the art of transforming all objects by the manner in which they are represented, of transforming the ideas attached to those objects and even the elements of the language which expresses those ideas. *Poetry*, in the sense of its etymology, is synonymous with *fiction*, and fiction is at bottom but a means of transposition. For as man is incapable of creating otherwise than by effecting new combinations, one cannot under any form of composition whatever, bring two things together which were previously not so, without transferring the one or the other and sometimes both.

The creations that belong to the epic poem consist almost always in the transpositions which the poet makes of his personages, their circumstances, and their actions. The *marvellous* belongs properly to this kind of poetry, the most essentially metaphorical of all, because it is the most powerful and most active engine for effecting those transpositions which the subject of the poem must undergo.

As the action of such subject is diverted into a channel altogether different from that of human affairs in their ordinary course by the intervention of supernatural powers, it is absolutely necessary

that the real or historical beings placed in another sphere of existence and in relation with imaginary or superhuman beings, should themselves be more or less transformed and that they should exchange the qualities of their ordinary condition, for those of a more exalted nature.

Was the employment of the marvellous by the ancients the cause or the effect of an ideal system of poetry? The same question may be asked concerning the style of the figures of their gods. But whatever may be the answer given, we know that the imitation of the forms of the body is found to accord with the want of representing their divinities under corporeal forms. In like manner the custom of making the gods act with mortals in their epic inventions must have rendered some agreement necessary in the qualities common to both. They transferred to the human personages a part of the characteristic strength and size, which they attributed to the inhabitants of Olympus. Hence that poetical exaggeration the impression of which he experienced who, reading Homer, regarded his heroes as having the dimensions of giants. This effect was the result of that convention, by virtue of which, the poet is bound to elevate the idea of his personages into a higher region than that of the ordinary state of human things.

The act of transforming and transposing persons and actions, more or less, is so appropriate to

poetry and so plainly establishes the nature of its imitative means, that through it may best be explained the necessity the poet experiences of choosing subjects that are rendered obscure by remote time and place.

Those who feel surprised that poems are not composed on contemporary events, forget that poetry is an art and that all art is fiction. When it is allowed that every subject may be rendered poetical, it is at the same understood that every subject is capable of undergoing some transformation. The versification does not make the poem, and a history, because written in verse, is not the less what it was already. Now it must be confessed that in this case reality opposes a moral obstacle to the employment of fiction; viz. the reality of facts which one has been witness to, of persons with whom one is immediately acquainted. As the historical truth required of the poet is only conventional, so he in return requires only a conventional belief. But is it not reasonable to suppose that a thorough knowledge of the circumstances may counteract this compact on our parts? How can we yield to a belief the contrary of what we know and see?

On this account poets for a long time abstained from presenting on the stage events of modern history, and Racine besought that the contemporaneous subject of his tragedy of Bajazet might be excused on the score of remoteness of place.

One can only dispute the justness of this taste by denying the constituent principles of poetical artifice. The taste for modern historical pieces and contemporary subjects evidently has its source in the error of which we have so often spoken, which tends to confound imitation with identity, to require reality in the image, and to exchange the intellectual pleasure of the mind, for the material enjoyment of the senses. To the same prejudice may be attributed the custom that is at the same time become so prevalent in painting, of choosing subjects of every-day occurrence and from low life, and treating them in the spirit of exact portraiture, consequently in direct opposition to that of the ideal.

Thus we see that in both arts alike the more the power of the imagination and with it the action of moral pleasure is enfeebled, the more does the artist find that he is obliged to confine himself to positive and material truth, which dispenses with mind, alike to enjoy and to invent.

What means of transformation, as regards persons, or of transposition, as regards place, can the artist and the poet employ in representing subjects which by their reality repel the means of fiction, or denude them of every charm in their employment? It is not that we would deny the physical possibility of such employment. Too many examples teach us how easy it is to mingle in an injudicious manner, the elements of fiction

or allegory, with those of historical reality, of which abuse we shall treat hereafter. We would here speak of possibility only under the moral relations of fitness and taste. The same observations apply to poetry. What has modern genius not attempted by alliances of this description, tending to introduce either the style of reality, that is, prose,* into inventions the most fictitious, or the grandeur of the most ideal style into subjects the most vulgar in conception,† as though with a view to degrade the epic, one while in the form of its language, another by the nature of its subject?

It must be allowed that the poet, in treating the subjects of contemporary history, not only does resort, but is obliged to resort, to such ill combined associations. Nor is this the least evil arising from such kind of subjects; and nothing more plainly evinces the unfitness of them, than that necessity for startling anachronisms belieing what every one knows, which arise out of the employment of the feigned personages and facts substituted by the author for the true facts and persons.

All these errors are but fresh proofs of what has been advanced, namely, that dramatic art exists by fiction, and that this fiction is grounded

* *Telemaque* par Fenelon.

† The poem of *Hermann and Dorothea*, by Göthe.

on transformation and transposition. (See Chapters iii. and iv.)

The poet will in vain use the right of transforming personages and transposing events, the materials of his subject, within the bounds of a more or less ideal world, if, limiting his power to that and neglecting the conditions of the privilege accorded to him, he himself establish between the ground-work and the requisite form of his invention, that is, style, a discordance tending to belie the spirit of this system.

A conception, the effect of which is to exalt in our minds the nature and existence of the personages, would present, if found to be contradicted by mean and ordinary language, the same kind of incongruity as that which in parody gives rise to the ridiculous, owing to the burlesque union of two contraries. This error, it must be confessed, is more rare in the works of poetry than in those of the arts of design, in which, as we shall hereafter have occasion to note, (see Chapters vii. and xiii.,) a wrong idea respecting a community of means between the poet and the painter, produces frequent discrepancies between the invention and its execution.

In poetry the transposition adopted in the general conception of the work is apt to induce, as a necessary consequence, the kind of transposition or transformation that the style ought to undergo, the word style being taken in that acceptation of

it which comprehends the choice of ideas, the employment of words, and the disposal of sentences.

Mere language is already of itself almost wholly composed of figures ; one cannot express oneself without employing them, and moreover the word *figure* is itself a *figurative* or metaphorical expression.

Now poetry is but an assemblage of all sorts of figures, among which may be distinguished those of words, of diction, and of thought. These are the principal means of transposition offered to the choice of the poet, to accommodate his style to the nature of his conception. The *figurative style*, so called because it rests on the habitual employment of every figure, is that most befitting the ideal order of subjects.

We do not pretend to enter here into the infinite detail of the tropes of the poetic style, and of what they consist in. The purpose of this chapter has been to set forth what are the means that the poet has at command to recompose his subjects after the manner of the ideal, and that those means of recomposition, as well with regard to its matter as its form, are to be found in the art of transforming or transposing. Whence it follows that they may almost all be referred to the general idea of metaphor.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF METAPHORICAL MEANS, DIFFERENT
ACCORDING AS THE ART DIFFERS. — OF THE ERRORS THAT
EXIST ON THIS HEAD, MORE ESPECIALLY IN THE ARTS OF
DESIGN.

THE act of transforming or transposing is certainly common to all the arts, and is, in all, a means of attaining to the ideal, their common end. But the springs of this act, that is, the means of producing it, differ in one art from another according to the particular nature of each. For want of a due regard to this difference of nature, and consequently of means, numerous errors are continually committed, more especially in painting or the arts of design. It will be sufficient to point out, in a few critical remarks, the source of this confusion.

Let us select, for instance, those of most ordinary occurrence amongst the figures of the poetical style, such as metaphor, simile, and hyperbole. Why does the poet use them so frequently? Because not having at command the visible means

belonging to painting, he is compelled, in order to render the qualities of objects intelligible to the senses, to have recourse to a substitute commensurate in value to the material of which he is deficient.

Thus metaphor, by which the idea of the physical and sensible object is substituted for that of the moral or abstract being, serves in poetry as a kind of painting, which is addressed to the eye of the imagination, and seems to endow with corporeity things the most incorporeal.

Poetry cannot display before our sight the angry man, and he is, therefore, described as with lightning flashing from his eyes. It cannot dazzle us with the brilliancy and whiteness of a beautiful complexion, and, therefore, it unites the lily and the rose on a beauteous cheek. Since it is inadequate to represent visibly the terrified man taking to flight, it gives wings to his feet.

The power of metaphor proceeds in a great degree from the effect of simile, which is to a certain extent inseparable from it. Simile possesses the property of enabling us to comprehend the qualities of a less known and less sensible object, by leading the mind to the perception of the more sensible qualities of a more familiar object.

Hence, the reason that similes are usually taken from the physical world, when applied to intellectual things, and still more frequently from amongst the commonest objects within the reach of the

generality of persons. Courage is likened to the lion, prudence to the serpent, and meekness to the lamb. The passions of the heart are whirlwinds; mental attainments are luminaries, anger is an ebullition, discord is armed with torches, the chief of a state is a pilot, kings are termed the pastors of man, &c.

In describing material objects, and more especially those whose worth consists in their magnitude, poetry is insufficient to trace out their dimensions; then it is that the poet finds himself obliged to resort to exaggeration or hyperbole. As the image of the painter reaches the imagination through the senses, so that of the poet affects the senses only through the imagination; it is, therefore, necessary so to excite it that it may rise to a level with the object. Hence, the similes derived from the oak, from mountains, the ocean, the sun, and from storms. But it is evident that it is from necessity, and not from choice that the poet has recourse to the means afforded by metaphorical hyperbole.

In the arts of design, in their turn, the same obligation is experienced, and the same need to recur to the use of metaphor in order to the development of ideas; we shall in the sequel (see Chapters xi. and xiv.) treat of the means available to that end. The question at present in hand is to show that poetical figures cannot for the most part be employed in them, or at least not in

the same manner and on the same subjects as in poetry, because the virtue of metaphors depends on the language peculiar to each art.

Those, for instance, which in poetry are intended to render things sensible to the mind which language is inadequate to present to the eye, are no longer metaphors, but merely twofold applications in the images of an art which possesses the property of representing bodies, and the appearance of motion. Why give wings to the man that I see running and hastening towards that vessel whose sails are already set? Why snakes on the head that is already expressive of envy? Painting is adequate to represent the positive and visible qualities of objects without any explanatory allusion. What need to superadd to the thing which is of itself visible that which is employed to supply the place of visibility where it is absent? Why explain what is intelligible in itself, more especially when the explanation is less clear than the thing it explains?

When the poet in order to impress on the imagination the delightful sensations occasioned by a beautiful morning, moist with dew, likens its effect to that of a youthful beauty adorned with flowers whose rosy fingers drop pearls; when *vice versa* the awakening of beauty is compared to the charms of Aurora and the freshness of a beautiful morning, we perceive that each of these transpositions supplies to the poet the place of the colours

that are wanting to him. Thus we commend all those similes borrowed from one order of things in favour of another as so many substitutes for the co-operation of sight; and we approve of that stanza of Ariosto* in which the modest virgin, and the morning rose, mutually exchange their bashful demeanour and unexpanded leaves.

But in a picture of sunrise, or of a landscape in which the artist disputes, as it were, with nature the charm of colour, the effect of the coming dawn and the freshness of the dew, what more would the figure of a young damsel scattering pearls from her hands do, what more could it say? Such a figure would be only an emblem of a beautiful morn. But of what good would the emblem be when the thing typified is before us?†

The most customary defect in the images or

* The stanza here alluded to is, I believe, xi. canto x.—
Translator.

La damigella non passava ancora
Quattordici anni; ed era bella e fresca,
Come rosa che spunti allora allora
Fuor della buccia, e col Sol nuovo cresca.

† Let it not be said that Poussin has so done. The subject of the picture in which he has introduced Aurora as sowing pearls before the sun's chariot, is wholly allegorical. The object of the landscape is not to represent the effect of a sun-rise. The picture betokens the shortness of life's career. Every thing therein is emblematical; Aurora, the Sun, and the last Hours already enveloped in the shades of night, are only symbols telling that life is but a day.

transpositions borrowed from the poet in the pictures of the painter is an inevitable incongruity, perplexing to the eye and the reason, between the object represented as real, and what ought to be only its *locum tenens*. Since the painter has at command bodies only with which to express unembodied beings, it is clear that the object which in poetry might be metaphorical, would cease to be so when invested by painting with a figure visible and real to the eye.

The poet enjoys an especial privilege in the employment of his metaphorical figures; for he is in no wise bound to endow any of the beings that he transforms or transposes, either with real dimensions or determinate proportions. What is the stature of the heroes of Homer, what that of his gods or of the allegorical personages that are introduced in his pictures? The poet may associate, may connect all things, because the relations of his combinations admit not of compass or scale of proportions. As with him the sun is a giant running his course, so the eyes of his fair one are so many suns. He unites every extreme. To him nothing is impossible, nothing immeasurable, because to him there is neither space nor dimension.

On the contrary, if the painter seeks to appropriate metaphors of a similar nature, the limits of space and matter within which he is bound to confine them give the lie to his attempts. He is

amenable to the laws of proportion and optics, which allow of no deviation or irregularity. The poetical image vanishes on the mere appearance of reality in the bodies. Thus metaphor exists no longer when it has become visible, and, when once embodied, disappears.

When Anacreon compares love to a bee, making it hover round a rose, and then lulling it to sleep on its bosom, a thousand fleeting ideas teeming with tender associations mingle with the poet's image ; for thus withheld from absolute sight, in how many ways may we not view it ? A painter borrows this subject from poetry, and sets before our eyes a little child fallen asleep in a rose blossom. I leave my readers to judge how fantastical a combination it would seem, and what incongruity such appearance of reality would present. The poet, it will be said, has finely imagined it. Undoubtedly, I reply, his love may nestle in the calix of a flower, as well as in the smile or the eyes of his fair one ; and for this reason, that the rose of Anacreon is not a plant, nor has his love a corporeal shape.

Even the commonest discourse, as already remarked in the preceding chapter, is composed of a number of figurative or metaphorical phrases. All language derives its efficiency from the faculty of transposition, that is, from a mutual interchange between the images of the material, and the ideas of the intellectual world ; and it is perverting the

art of design to realize in it the abstractions that belong to that of language. The error of embodying in reality to the eye, what language has addressed only to the imagination, is sometimes sufficient to mar the most beautiful compositions.

The fine picture of *Coriolanus* by Poussin will afford an instance.

When *Veturia*, according to Titus Livius, in order to move the enraged general to compassion, personifies the city of Rome, and represents her as in mourning and in tears, the image of the personified city is depicted to the imagination with vast proportions, or at least with arbitrary dimensions. What is the painter to do who borrows this subject? What stature ought he to invest her with? Poussin has, I think, done best by giving to his figure of Rome the same proportions as those of the other personages. But she is thus only a female on a par with all the rest. The metaphor has lost its effect, because the image has found a measure. The poetical genius of painting would, perhaps, require that the composition should in this case be confined within the limits of the historical form of composition.

What gives rise in part to the charm and the power of the metaphor of the poet is, that whereas it is a fiction of the imagination, it acquires no consistency excepting what it receives from the fancy of the reader or hearer. No one can suppose that these figures are to be taken strictly to

the letter, and we are in fact more struck with what they ought to make known than with what they do, with what they are intended than with what they really do convey.

When the genius of death is said to pour out the waters of contagion on a desolate city, when adversity hurls her last shaft at her victim, or presents the cup of grief to the dying man, when the arbiter of mankind is represented as between two urns from which he draws good and evil, nothing positive fixes the mind on determinate forms, on a type the reality of which diverts it from the thing typified : nor is precision required in any similar relations.

When in metaphorical language, instead of a personage dying or being represented to us as dead, the act of going down or of having gone down to *the* tomb, is substituted for a common idea or a motionless image, no precise form is given to the personage, no existence either to the action or place ; there is nothing definite in the image, which remains under the veil, and in the indeterminate vagueness of a general expression. A mere change of article before the word tomb would, by particularizing the figure of speech, render it null or ridiculous. It needs but to say, go down into *a* tomb. Just in this manner is the work of the artist ridiculous, who, being compelled by the material of his art to particularize the same image, has shown us in very reality his

personage going down some steps that terminate in a sarcophagus.* Here the poetry of the image has vanished with the idea that rendered it general. What ought to be taken in a figurative sense necessarily reverts to a simple one. The immaterial is become material, and the sculptor has unsuspectingly reconverted into prose, the image he believed he had purloined from poetry.

In order to evince how frequently such kinds of mistakes occur in the arts of design it is but necessary to call attention here to the numerous monuments in the composition of which the artist, borrowing from the poet and the orator those metaphors in which death is presented under every sort of idea from the terrible to the pathetic, those prosopopeias in which the dead are awakened and brought forth from the tomb, and a great variety of figures of speech which personify death or its destroying power, has allowed himself to set before us hideous allegories which, while shocking the senses, have by their reality dispelled the charm that attached to those images and have closed the way to the heart and the imagination.

I have already remarked, (see Part I. Chap. ix.) on the ill advised desire of being otherwise than is necessary a poet in painting, and a painter in poetry. The spirit of this criticism would how-

* The monument to Marshal Saxe at Strasbourg.

ever be misunderstood if it were supposed that this meant that there is no poetry in painting, and that poetry has not its pictures. Every art undoubtedly has its means of transposition or metaphor, but in each they should be derived only from the nature of the language that belongs to it. The arts are like so many different dialects each with its own particular genius. We know that what, according to the spirit of one language is poetical, very frequently loses this virtue and becomes prosaical and oftentimes ridiculous, when transferred word for word into another. The case is the same between one art and another when the artist undertakes the literal translation of images, transferring them to a station not their own, and yet investing them with the very same garb, which only serves to render them still more alien.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE ACT OF TRANSFORMING AND TRANSPOSING CONSIDERED
AS A MEAN OF IDEAL IMITATION IN THE ARTS OF DESIGN.

WHAT has been said above does not in any wise tend to take from the arts of design their faculty of metaphor, to deprive them of the act of transforming or transposing, a privilege of poetical genius, a powerful means of ideal imitation, and a resource common alike to all the arts.

On the contrary I propose to show that the arts of design are entitled to a much more extensive range of metaphor than is usually assigned them ; and we have already seen (Chap. v.) that however much the act of generalizing may equally belong to them, that yet it does not produce its full effect except when linked with that which transforms or transposes persons, facts, and things of whatever nature.

It is not against the use of metaphor in the arts of design that I have argued in the preceding chapter, but only against the employment of cer-

tain metaphorical means which are not adapted to them ; it is not against the propriety of changing the appearance of things, but of pretending to bring about that effect by modes of procedure which make no change, or, if so, only to a wrong purport.

I now propose to contend against the prejudices of those who, referring every thing to matter in the imitation of bodies, look upon every change of appearance wrought in the subjects or objects which the metaphorical system of art is fitted to deal with and modify, as a violation of truth.

This averseness to metaphor in the arts of design is both very common and very widely diffused. It is supposed that because the imitation belonging to them is employed about corporeal forms, that it ought therefore to be confined within the limits of material reality. Living in continual association with all that constitutes the physical models of these arts, persons become familiarized with a state of being and a manner of viewing it that is closely allied to instinctive habits, and would allow of no imitation but that directly addressed to instinctive perception. Thus the generality refuse to acknowledge as fitting or allowable, any change in the images of persons or subjects, which is due to metaphor in the ideal style of design, to the transpositions of allegory or to the conventions on which are founded the different styles of composition that are so many means of ideal imitation.

Be it also remembered that it is in a still more absolute manner maintained, that no metaphorical change should be wrought on subjects appertaining to the class of recent or modern facts, of personages either cotemporary or invested with well known pre-eminence, in short, of all things to which a knowledge of their reality is attached.

Those who, on the one hand, evince the greatest obstinacy in this view of the question, approve, on the other, or at least consent, that the same men, the same facts, the same things should change their forms in the hands of the writer, should appear under other aspects, be invested with other colouring, and be allied with supernatural and imaginary beings.

The fact is that in the art of writing every body acknowledges two very distinct degrees of style and composition which, hallowed by custom, pass under the names of plain or prosaic and *figurative* or *poetical* according as the writer by the method in which he treats his subject, designs it chiefly either to satisfy the reason or flatter the imagination.

When therefore the same freedom is refused to the arts of design, it is owing to a neglect of the twofold property they also possess of being exercised with regard to the subjects of their imitation, at one time, in a prosaic, at another in a poetical style, more or less directly in relation, the one with the senses, the other with the mind.

This prejudice has its source (as already remarked) in the false idea, formed by the generality, of the kind of truth belonging to imitation, which they confound with that which is proper to reality. They forget that every art is more or less fiction and that all fiction consists in exchanging reality for some semblance. They forget that the model of the arts of design does not the less, because material, afford the most diversified aspects to the mind's eye as well as to that of the body, and that its materiality may always be converted by the genius of metaphor into a vehicle for the highest conceptions of the understanding. And in fact such changes do not in any wise alter the truth. The artist does but exchange one kind of truth for another. Since in the subject the point of view is transposed, it cannot be rendered in conformity with truth unless that be likewise transformed.

In this consists the main secret of our theory, and it is applicable alike to the arts of design and to those of poetry.

In the fictions of the poet, which are nothing more than realities transformed, there is truth, but it is truth transposed from one order of things to another. It is the same with the artist. When he brings about the transformations his subject requires, we still find in it truth, but we must place ourselves in the same point of view in which it is presented to us. That is to say, we must

view such subjects with the eye, and judge them in the spirit, that metaphor requires, after the same manner, in short, that we should judge the works of the poet.

Every one is agreed that, for instance, scenic imitation rests on a more or less palpable exchange of the real truth of facts and personages for the fictitious truth of their image, (see Part I. Chap. x., and Part II. Chapters viii. and ix.,) and that the poet could not become the faithful copyist of the former without being wanting in what is due to his art; it is also allowed that truth, not that which adheres closely to the text of history, but which is the spirit of it, does not the less exist upon the stage because the poet has been capable of grasping it elsewhere than in detailed reality, and has by the force of his genius transformed it in order to bring it within the scope of his epic or dramatic action.

Undoubtedly he pursues a proper course when he confines himself to describing, through the virtue of abstract metaphor, now the effects of political events by their causes, and the result of actions by the passions that moved them, and now, on the other hand, setting forth by some convulsion or memorable event the train of secret motives and multifarious agents that were the authors of it. Far then from accusing him of having falsified truth by this change of features, we should commend him for having advanced it to a

higher degree of splendour. Thus does Polyeucte* present us with the truest picture of the establishment of Christianity, though all the facts of the piece are feigned. And thus though differing from the historian in the detail of the facts may the author of Britannicus† be accounted as truthful, in his form of composition, as Tacitus in his.

It may in like manner happen that a poem with its fictions, or perhaps by its fictions, will afford a clearer idea of certain events, a more striking resemblance of certain personages, that it will better depict the spirit of some particular period, or the physiognomy of some man, than could the most scrupulously detailed chronicle. The Henriade, for instance, might contain as great an amount of truths, as to worth, as the *Journal de l'Etoile*; ‡ and the poem of Tasso as the history of *Guillaume de Tyr*. §

All this merely means that there are more kinds of truth than one in imitating the many-sided model of nature. Whichever face of the object is considered, or whatever be the manner of considering it, that is, of applying to it one or another process of imitation, we find an option between

* One of P. Corneille's most admired Tragedies.

† Racine.

‡ Pierre de l'Estoile was the author of *Journal de Henri III.* and *Journal du Regne de Henri IV.*

§ Guillaume de Tyr, Archbishop of Tyre, wrote "Histoires des Croisades" as far as the year 1184.—*Translator.*

the absolute truth of reality and the conventional truth of imitation. Nevertheless, for want of a due knowledge and perception of these different modes of truth, either the art or the artist is accused of falsifying and deceiving, when, in fact, the accusers themselves are deceived, both as to the work to be judged and the point of view coinciding with it, as well as on the rule by which a judgment is to be formed.

I have already pointed out why this confusion is more likely to arise in the art of painting, because though it undoubtedly admits of a prosaic and a poetical mode, yet both are necessarily and first of all addressed to the physical senses, and are, as necessarily, invested with all the attributes of matter.

Surely if this art possesses the means of transforming, at the artist's pleasure, things, persons, and actions, in their several images, no one will dispute the propriety of employing those means in its compositions.

But have we not seen that this art is capable of representing objects in each of the two systems of imitation, positive, and ideal? May not every subject, by the resources which are proper to it, be transferred from the one to the other? It does not admit of doubt but that in this art, as in that of poetry, all facts may be recomposed according to their intellectual or moral point of view. It is alike adequate to multiply the most simple, to

condense the most multifarious, to unravel the chief point of view in the most complicated, and; by referring them to their most simple expression, to give to what is only a part, the intrinsic value of the whole. It, therefore, possesses the power of transposing actions from the physical to the moral order of things.

Is it necessary to prove that, like the art of the poet, it has at command every kind of means fitted for transforming persons and things, with a view to embellish their appearance and enlarge their proportions? Can any one be ignorant that by virtue of this connexion between the physical and moral world our minds are led to the conception of grand ideas, our hearts to experience noble sentiments, and our understandings to grasp high relations, by the sole effect of the magnitude of forms, the purity of their outlines, and the harmony of their collective whole? And will it still be said when the artist thus exchanges in his works the means of material expression for those of a moral energy, that he falsifies, that he deceives, and that he leads into error?

It is with a view to moral truth that the poet calls hyperbole in aid of those images, the traits of which he would aggrandize to our imaginations. It is to comply with this truth that, being reduced to the necessity of depicting the great man only by the thoughts, language, and actions, with which he invests him, he amplifies the ex-

pression of them in order to raise them to a level with the character he would represent.

With a view to this same truth it is that the artist works certain analogous changes on the outward appearance of man and the configurations of bodies, and these changes relate to the same end. There is but this difference, that in poetry ideas convey to us the forms of things and persons, and that in painting forms become the correlative signs of the ideas proposed to our conception.

Thus while the one, by the aid of metaphorical conceptions and the figures of poetical language, augments in idea the energy of a personage by the actions he is made to do, heightens the worth of his sentiments by the expression given to them, and ennobles his thoughts by a choice of words and discourse; the other effects in the same personage changes of form, physiognomy, and proportion, which, in his own peculiar language, are equivalent to the metaphors of the poet.

Now these changes are still more necessary and more imperatively required of an art which, addressed to the mind through the eyes of the body, can render moral qualities perceptible only through the intervention of the physical organs, and by means of the forms of matter.

It cannot be too strongly urged against those who complain of such like intrusions in the order of sensible things, that in painting, that is,

to the eye, no greatness of soul can co-exist with a diminutive body, no worth with a feeble frame. Great and noble sentiments do not dwell within mean and stunted forms. In sculpture, it cannot be a hero under a coarse exterior.

Hence, the necessity in the arts of design, of effecting a change in all subjects, whatever they may be, in which moral and intellectual beauty is to be represented, and of changing, as well in the form of the personages as by the style of composition, the elements of real and material, for those of a conventional and ideal existence. Now every physical change is more or less perceptible to the eye.

That is to say, that in the arts of design every metaphor is more or less a metamorphosis.

I say more or less ; and in fact the changes that actions and persons are made to undergo, according to the manner in which the artist represents their images, require very numerous degrees. Perhaps, indeed, they would be found numberless if one attempted to reckon up all the different gradations that genius might render perceptible in the varying expression of every subject.

But we are about to reduce the different means of transformation dependent on the arts of design to three chief modes of procedure, being those most frequently practised in ideal imitation. They consist of what are termed the styles of *historical*, *allegorical*, and *symbolical composition*.

CHAPTER X.

OF TRANSFORMATION IN THE HISTORICAL STYLE OF
COMPOSITION.

THE historical style of composition, understood as a metaphorical means of imitation in the works of design, will not require at our hands any lengthened observations. Since this form of composition allows also of the employment of allegory, notions which may be readily applied to it will be found in the subsequent chapters.

But it is first of all necessary to explain in what sense the word 'historical' is to be applied, according to the analysis adopted in our theory, and indeed according to the actual usage of the arts. It usually serves to designate that division of the art of painting in which the highest subjects are treated, and it establishes in this art a like distinction, with respect to worth and superiority, as that which has appeared to us to separate the imitation belonging to the ideal style from that belonging to what may be termed the low style,

as seen in the works of the Dutch and Flemish school.

A comparison between a picture of Raffaello, and another of Teniers will be found a sufficient illustration of the above distinction. Although it is probable that the name of historical painter, in opposition to that of the painter of low or domestic pieces, arose from the circumstance of the former usually representing subjects and personages drawn from history, yet it must not be supposed that the title 'historical' does not equally belong to pictures which express subjects taken from other categories, as poetry or fable. In fact, and moreover according to the custom of the profession, the word 'historical' whether applied to the kind of subject, the character of design, or the nature and style of composition, may be best defined negatively, by saying that it includes every subject, design, invention, and composition that may be looked upon as differing from, or opposed to, the style above mentioned, which affects low, homely, or trifling subjects, and is limited to the imitation of reality.

Thus it is sufficiently evident that the historical style of composition, considered as a means of ideal imitation, cannot exist but by the aid of metaphor, and by virtue of some transformation of the elements of reality.

The transformation belonging to the historical style of composition is not the less appropriate to

the genius of imitation, because it is less absolute than that of the two other styles of which we shall hereafter treat. The painter has the same right and power of changing the appearance of his subject. With regard even to those which he draws from the truest and best authenticated narratives, he is equally under the necessity of recomposing the substance of them, and changing their details and circumstances. His first care must be to enhance the proportions, and refine the physiognomy of all his personages.

If the historical style does not go so far in its changes as to arrive at absolute fiction, which privilege belongs to the other styles (see the succeeding Chapter), and if the metaphor is not urged so far as to become metamorphosis, it is because this form of composition holds relation with reason as well as with imagination. Grand, noble, and dignified in its character, it would seem rather to be analagous with eloquence than with poetry. But it must on no account be supposed that the historical painter is to limit himself to the mere part of an historian, and be contented with the same kind of truth that, above all other, is required in history. We again repeat that the spirit, and not the letter, of that truth is the only proper object of his imitation.

Let it not be forgotten that what is here termed composition, in conformity with customary language, should rather, in compliance with the tenor

of our theory, be named *re-composition* : for, whether the artist generalizes or transforms his subject, he equally does it by substituting for the state of reality one that is more or less fictitious. In delineating the images even of personages the best known in history, he is in no wise bound to such a strict adherence to the fidelity of portraiture as would weaken the impression of the historical style. Though Alexander is described by his historians as of a diminutive height, the kind of truth required in the historical style would by no means render it necessary that he should be represented in the midst of his companions-in-arms under inferior proportions. That painter would evince a false respect for truth, who should represent Hannibal with but one eye, and Marshal Vendôme hump-backed.

The historical style of composition holds a middle rank as to form or design between the ordinary state of existence and that which, from its purity and a character of abstract beauty, is attributed to supernatural beings, the free creations of poetical imagination in a superhuman order of things.

The introduction of allegorical personages is not excluded from this style, more especially when those personages form, according to current belief, a part of the subject treated, or are, in received opinion, the object of it. We here allude to those passages of sacred history in which, for

instance, miraculous visions, and apparitions of angels, saints, or mysterious beings occur. The addition of these more or less imaginary beings to the historical scene or action is considered as in itself constituting the historical. The artist, in that case, is not obliged to change the character and forms of the human personages in order to make their appearance accord with that of the supernatural beings.

This is not the case as we shall see presently with those compositions the subject or prime mover of which is allegory and of which it becomes, in consequence of the convention adopted, the essential and active spring of a poetical machinery, in which the marvellous requires that all besides should be in accordance with it, that is to say, undergo a total change of appearance. (See the two following Chapters.)

I think I have said enough to show that the historical style of composition may, from the constant nature of the subjects belonging to it, be defined as holding a middle rank between the style of absolute and that of ideal truth. It will also be seen that, in their fullest extent, certain conventions which are necessarily attended by the absolute re-composition and entire transformation of the subject, are inconsistent with it. Among these is metaphorical or poetical nudity, a convention more especially appropriate to sculpture, and which ought not to be indiscriminately employed in all the subjects of historical painting.

CHAPTER XI.

OF TRANSFORMATION OR TRANSPOSITION IN THE ALLEGORICAL
STYLE OF COMPOSITION.*

OF all the metaphorical means employed by the artist in the arts of design, to enable him to idealize his personages and subjects, none affords him more scope for changing their appearance than the style of composition termed allegorical. The historical is much more closely restricted. Its personages, though placed in a higher region than that of realities, are not admitted into that of the ideal. It occupies, as we have already said, nearly the same rank with regard to the latter, as does the elevated style of prose, or of eloquence, in relation to poetry. As respects the symbolical style of composition, it has less the property of representing things or persons, than of occasioning

* By a composition in the allegorical style, we do not mean one in which mere allegory constitutes the subject, but where it is resorted to as a means of effecting a change in the spirit and appearance of a historical subject.

them to be conceived or imagined by means of conventional signs.

Allegorical composition partakes also of this property, that is to say, as respects the impressions produced by the subjects it embraces, it is addressed as much to the mind as to the eye, if allegory be truly defined as presenting one thing to signify another, at one time designating a real personage in the shape of an imaginary figure, and at another expressing a thought or the most abstract idea under a bodily form.

In allegorical composition in the works of the arts of design, subjects are changed or transformed after two manners, in whole, or in part.

According to the first, the subject undergoes a total transformation, especially as regards the personages. In sculpture for instance, in a great number of the ancient statues, the appearance being entirely transformed, the different personages are metamorphosed into a Mars, a Mercury, or an Apollo. Thus the artist of old was afforded a poetical means of representing moral qualities under corporeal forms. Hercules betokened strength and courage, Minerva prudence, and Venus grace. It is the same with the allegorical conceptions of later times; they afford for the transformation of persons a variety of images indicative of the virtues that distinguish them. Such are the allegorical figures of Justice, Generosity, Meekness, &c.

Actions also are easily subjected to a total transformation. In this case the allegory results from a peculiar operation in which the artist reduces the image of a fact or event to the elementary causes or to the summary idea of the effects that are capable of being personified by art. The power of allegorical composition extends even so far as to render perceptible and plainly speaking to the eyes, moral ideas which one would suppose could only be expressed by language.

The means employed by calumny in order to deceive an ignorant prince, the effects of the credulity that prompted the denunciation, the death of the innocent, and the tardy repentance leading to a confession of the truth, all these Apelles was able to render intelligible in that beautiful allegorical composition, which Lucian has given us a description of, and the image of which has been restored in a design by Raffaello.

One mode of employing the allegorical style of composition when it becomes necessary to apply it to subjects that are very extensive or much crowded with figures, is to effect their representation by a system of reduction. The artist who so makes use of it must either seize the predominating idea of the action, or, attaching himself to the principal personage in the subject, invest his person with such a generalized character as to include all the particular ideas found united in the subject. This description of allegory may

be termed collective. According to the tenor of this species of metaphor we find the passage of the Rhine by the French army expressed by the single figure of Louis the Fourteenth trampling the river, as personified, under foot.

This collective metaphor is most appropriately employed by the sculptor, in the representation of cities, provinces, kingdoms, and whatever carries with it the idea of a number of persons and a great extent of space in the subject.

The art of sculpture would indeed express the fewest things of any, did it not compensate by the significancy of its images for what is wanting to them in circumstantiality. In none, therefore, is there more need, in order to its being understood, of allegorical composition as an interpreter, which unfortunately but too often requires an interpreter itself. But it is for the genius of the artist to discover amid the resources of the ideal the true means of rendering metaphor intelligible, by compelling the mind of the beholder to yield itself up to the felicitous transposition by which the reality of objects is exchanged for their allegorical image.

Unable to relate actions by their details and accompanying circumstances, devoid of the advantages of colour and the expedients which the painter employs to extend the space which his subject occupies, the sculptor has recourse to a fiction peculiar to his art, by which he induces the supposition that his figures, in the basso-relievo

style of composition, are the personified characters of a species of emblematic writing. It is evident how very necessary it is for the artist to have recourse to those metaphorical conventions, which, by recomposing the elements of the action to be expressed, reproduce it abridged to its most characteristic features. Now all allegorical composition has the same property.

Conventions of this kind which belong rather to sculpture than to painting, evince to us how necessary to the language of that art, are all resources that may tend to change what, in personages, is termed their costume, and what I term the actual condition of the portrait; in a word, whatever in the subject is particular. Hence, as we shall see hereafter, (Chapters xvi. and xvii.,) the necessity of employing in the ideal style of design, either poetical nudity, or the drapery and habiliments sanctioned by the arts of antiquity.

We have been observing that in allegory the object of the painter's or sculptor's composition may be wholly transformed by substituting fictious for real personages and by appropriating actions and subjects in order to metamorphose them, to change their substance, and to transpose them, now from the moral to the physical order, and again *vice versa* from the region of realities to that of intellectual beings.

We now come to speak of a mode of allegorical composition in which the subjects of imitation are

transposed or transformed after a less absolute manner. It consists in the introduction of fictitious or allegorical personages and their association with historical or real personages, that is, such as those which we have seen to be the object of the style of composition treated of in the preceding chapter. It will be recollected that to the changes wrought in it by metaphor was assigned, as regards the conception and style of its forms, an intermediate degree between the natural and poetical, between the real and the ideal.

I think I have made it sufficiently understood that the historical style of composition, although in a less degree requiring the employment of allegorical fictions, has, notwithstanding, its poetry and its metaphors, nor fails to use the power of transforming the personages and the aspect of the subjects adapted to it. Transformation admits of a considerable number of degrees. The artist applies to historical subjects means of metaphor which are not on that account allegories. The varieties of character that result from forms more or less noble, drapery more or less imposing, materials and ornaments more or less rich, change it is true the aspect of the action but without changing its nature. It is the same in the art of dressing, one may change one's apparel without disguising oneself. In general, historical metaphor does not tend to a complete change in the appearance of beings; it is confined to the veri-

similar, the probable, and only embellishes the natural condition of things.

When the allegorical style of composition is introduced in historical subjects, the artist is required to make a greater change of appearance. It then becomes necessary that he should raise, so much the more, the proportions of his personages, that he should embellish their forms, ennoble their action, their attitudes, their countenances, and that he should elevate the character of all the accessories.

Suffice it to say, that if he would remain faithful to the reality of place, time, manners, costumes, and whatever serves to particularize the subject of his composition, he must eschew the employment of allegorical beings or give rise to a repulsive discordancy. This will be greater in proportion as the difference of costume between the real personages of the subject and the imaginary beings of the allegory is more perceptible. This it is that prevents the admission of allegory into modern subjects, the appearance of which it is not deemed well to transform by an absolute change of costume; and this it is which requires their transformation, when the personified beings of allegory are admitted into such compositions.

Who indeed does not see that the readiest way of rendering allegory insignificant or ridiculous would be to apply it, as above supposed, to a modern subject, either by making the allegorical

being take the costume of the real personage, or allowing the difference of the respective appearance of these two sorts of personages to subsist between them? In the one case, the allegory would be nullified for want of a visible character; in the other, there would be nothing but confusion and ambiguity, since two contradictory kinds of appearances would lay claim to possession of the same subject. Hence it is that in the composition of every subject in which allegorical beings assist in a historical action, and are conjoined with others, either modern or derived from history, the moral harmony requires that the costume (by which is understood all the accessaries and circumstances of existence) of the personages deemed real, should approach as near as possible to that of the imaginary or poetical personages.

We shall in the next chapter bring forward some examples to prove with still greater clearness, the incompatibility of these two elements thus commingled in one and the same subject.

Some, in objecting to this decision as regards the arts of design, have put forward the authority of the poets, who, say they, freely associate in their inventions, allegorical with historical and even modern personages without at all troubling themselves about the suitableness of their costume, or attempting in the description to accommodate the differences of their respective states of being. Although, they add, the historical personage may

be accompanied by Mars or Minerva we do not find that the poet is obliged to forewarn us, for instance, that his hero, though modern, wears the helmet and armour, or the costume of the heroic ages.

The reply to this objection has already been given more than once in what we have said concerning the difference of the imitative means belonging to each art. The poet would endeavour in vain, even by a purposed description, to offend the mind by the difference between the outward costume or appearance of these two orders of personages; it is absolutely impossible that these differences can have the same contradictory effect in poetry as in painting. Suppose the desire of rendering an incongruity of this sort perceptible to be actually entertained, which indeed is even less probable. Then on the part of the poet it can but affect the imagination; while in painting it will offend both the eye and the imagination. In pictorial metaphor all poetry is visible poetry. In painting the beings are poetical or fail to be so, through the effect of the corporeal form. So that every discrepancy of the kind in question is not only an error of taste, but is also a contradiction in matter.

The comparison instituted on this point between the poet and the painter, is just enough, were it correctly drawn. The mistake lies in the particular parallels chosen. For that which corre-

sponds to what is termed the material costume of the figures of the painter is the moral costume of the personages of the poet; in other words, the manners of those he makes speak and act. Now there can be no doubt but that the poet, in associating historical or such as are accounted real personages, with allegorical or ideal beings, is bound to make them accordant by raising their language, sentiments, and manners to a level with the proprieties enjoined by the order of things or persons to which they are transferred.

But sentiments, language, and deportment in poetry, are correlative with character, form, and costume in painting.

It must therefore be allowed that in allegorical compositions, whether those in which the whole of the subject undergoes a poetical transformation or those in which the transformation is effected by the association of allegorical with historical beings, the painter no more changes the persons and actions when he gives them other bodies and other forms than does the poet in his ideal conceptions. He changes them indeed after another manner, he changes them according to the proper means of his art and with a view to the organ to which that art must necessarily correspond.

CHAPTER XII.

OF CERTAIN PROPRIETIES TO BE OBSERVED IN THE ALLEGORICAL STYLE.

THE allegorical personages introduced into the compositions of the arts of imitation, in order to the transformation of their subjects, are either the divinities of Paganism that have as it were been naturalized into our poetry, or those imaginary beings that have at all times been created by an abuse of language, and which imitation has invested with corporeal forms, although they are in fact only personified abstractions to which no creed has ever attributed a real existence.

To these last it is that the term allegorical more particularly belongs. Although different from the former, they have for the most part, under other denominations, been identified with the Pagan deities. Prudence, knowledge, victory, strength, justice, courage, beauty, grace, mental endowments, and physical properties and effects have, in the imitation of the arts of design, very natu-

rally assumed the features, forms, characters and resemblances of the ancient divinities. Under the pencil and the chisel of the modern artist, Minerva, Mercury, Hercules, Mars, Themis, Apollo, the Muses, the Graces, the Nymphs, and the Naiads have lent their forms to all the intellectual qualities that language expresses, and to the artist there is no difference between the Wisdom of allegory and the Minerva of mythology.

Thus the mythological of ancient times, and the allegorical of the present are necessarily confounded the one with the other in as far as regards their images. If, as we have seen in the foregoing chapter, the right and the power of transforming historical subjects by means of allegory belong to the art of design, and if the figures of modern allegory resemble those of mythology, we must thence infer that the artist, when he associates real with fictitious personages, the model of which is derived from antiquity, is so much the more obliged to invest them with the ancient costume, character, and circumstances, lest, in neglecting to do so, one part of his composition should belie the other.

This leads us at once to discuss the strictures which some critics have passed on the employment, in modern subjects, of what they term the figures of Paganism.

Since the mythological and the modern allegorical are necessarily confounded, and taken the one for

the other in corporeal imitation, the critical remarks of the Abbe Dubos against the use of the figures of Paganism in subjects or *events* which, says he, *have taken place since the extinction of that religion*,* cannot be admitted without some restriction. Indeed the exclusion thus pronounced against the beings of the mythology, because a belief in them no longer exists, would carry with it also the exclusion from the arts of design of the allegorical beings that have assumed their forms, attributes, and whole appearance. It does not appear that the Abbe Dubos wished to push his theory so far as this. But a want of due distinction on this head seems to prove that he had not taken account of the comparative force of allegorical figures, according to the circumstances under which they are employed, and the manner of employing them. Truly, the alliance by the poet of the gods of Paganism, presented as such, and under their own proper names, with the personages of a Christian subject, would be a monstrous incompatibility offensive to the imagination and repugnant to reason. The same may undoubtedly be said of the painter, who, in a picture devoted to some event pertaining to the Christian religion, should introduce and bring into play, the beings of the Pagan mythology. But there is a

* *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, tom. i. sect. 24.

great difference between a Christian subject, and a subject that merely belongs to some time or country in which Christianity reigns. Human things, and historical actions and persons, may always, in art, be considered as distinct from religion. The hero of the poet and the painter may always be transformed by metaphor, and transposed into an imaginary order of things, whatever be the religion of his time and country, without any outrage on religious belief, provided such transpositions have no relation with it.

Now the above distinction is dictated by fitness of taste, even though it were not by the spirit of Christianity itself.

Though the spirit of the Christian religion rejects the profane admixture of mythological fictions with its articles of faith, alike in the composition of the poet and the painter, it does not the less admit of, and approve, the employment of allegorical figures in the representations and images which concern it, which figures, as personified virtues, assume every form of the ancient mythological sculpture. The same toleration is extended towards the representations of the Eternal Father, the angels, and other mysterious beings, the forms of which have been borrowed from those in which ancient art invested its Pagan creations.

Returning to the question of taste and fitness we would remark that, supposing all the conditions of the subject observed, the artist's error

does not consist in mingling allegorical beings with historical personages. His error most frequently consists in not knowing how to assimilate the style, character, and design of the one with that of the other. Now, we have seen that the historical personage must as much as possible be clothed with the appearance of the allegorical order of things, because the allegorical personage cannot, in painting, change its appearance without ceasing to be allegorical.

A striking example of the error of employing allegory in a subject, the historical personages of which cannot admit of a change of appearance or costume, is that afforded by a picture in the gallery of Marie de Medicis in which Rubens has associated, under the positive form of the Mercury of fable, the messenger who is bearing the emblem of peace to two cardinals, one of whom is persuading the queen to accept the olive branch, while the other dissuades her from it. Here is a twofold contradiction, the one between the mythological character of Mercury represented naked, and the appearance of the two personages dressed in the costume of one of the chief dignities of the Christian church, the other between the altogether metaphorical style of the two allegorical beings, Prudence and Peace, and the wholly positive style of imitation in the personages that attend on the queen.

I must remark, in order to the better under-

standing of this theory, that Rubens has not, so often as some are pleased to think, fallen into this kind of incongruity. Not only are the greater number of the pictures in his gallery exempt from it, but the general system that reigns throughout in the composition of that series of *historico-poetical* subjects, agrees more than is supposed with that which I am endeavouring to establish.

In the greater number of those pictures, setting aside such as contain only portraits, Marie de Medicis, from her infancy, which Minerva, Mercury, and the Graces combine to instruct, to her death, is always represented according to an abstract and ideal system of composition. The painter has nowhere expressed an absolute and material action. All the compositions that are explained by personages apparently taking a more or less active part in them, have only for their subjects, either the motives and results of the queen's undertakings, or the causes and effects of the acts of her government and councils. The different circumstances of the stormy period in which she lived are not so shown in detail as to present the facts in their reality, but by metaphorical images of the passions that influenced events. In fact, she is concerned in no material action; every situation in which she is associated by the painter with *metaphorical* personages, gives rise on her part but to an *allegorical* action.

But for some inconsistencies such as that we

have remarked above and, putting out of the question his not sufficiently ideal style of design, and that tendency which the great colourist evinced towards the incorrect and somewhat low style of portraiture, Rubens might be cited as having for the most part in the compositions of his gallery, furnished a true model of the manner most in accordance with the system of transforming historical subjects by the admixture of allegory, and the method of generalizing actions, by exchanging their real and absolute aspect for that point of view in which their political causes and effects, their general results and relations, may be considered.

I cannot then refrain from further contending against the opinions of the Abbe Dubos who, in his *critical reflections*, seems to me to have never entered into any of the considerations relative to generalized imitation. He thinks *that the picture of the accouchement of Marie de Medicis, would please more, had Rubens, instead of the Genius and allegorical figures introduced in the composition, substituted those of the ladies of that time who might have been present at the bed-side of the queen, &c.*

This means nothing more than that Rubens might have conceived and executed this subject according to the system of reality. Who doubts it? And further, who would doubt but that as a great portrait painter he would, by a group of *ladies of that time*, have represented a domestic

scene affording another kind of interest? But these *portrait* ladies would have served only to express a particular idea. Rubens, on the contrary, wished by his allegorical figures to represent collective beings, signs of general ideas, and the universality of the public sentiments and affections, that is, the moral and political effect that must be produced by the birth of an heir to the throne, bringing destruction to the hopes of the promoters of discord. It was, therefore, necessary that he should avail himself of allegorical composition. Had he substituted that proposed by the Abbe Dubos he would merely have given a scene in the private life of Marie de Medicis. We may add to the farther praise of Rubens as regards this picture, that he has neither belied the style of the allegorical image, nor weakened its effect on the mind by any admixture of personages seemingly real or appertaining to the opposite style.

Lebrun, on the ceiling of the gallery of Versailles, has represented the principal passages in the life of Louis XIV. with a still closer observance of the allegorical style, both as regards conception and execution. But this painter's style and taste of design were more accordant with the poetical and ideal style of allegory than was that of Rubens.

I have merely cited these examples the better to explain wherein the artist is sometimes wanting,

and how he conforms to what is required in allegorical composition. The first condition then necessary to be observed, when the subject allows of the mixture of individuals of a supposed different nature, is to accommodate and reconcile their character, forms, and appearance by raising, as much as may be, the existent state of the real to a level with that of the poetical personages; an operation which, as before remarked, cannot take place reciprocally, because if the appearance of the latter were brought down to a level with the low character of the former, the allegory would cease to be visible, and would, therefore, not exist.

But there is still another class of proprieties to be observed in order to bring about this accordance; (no allusion is here intended to the degree of talent, skill, and sentiment in the artist.) The question merely concerns a rule of taste which requires that the poetical or allegorical personage, when participating in human actions, should not be figured in awkward attitudes, nor with gestures expressive of strenuous efforts, nor with motions irreconcilable with outward dignity. Independent of some subjects whose purport is to betoken by the very action of the personages, effort and motion, it is usually befitting to represent them in an attitude of composure, with a calm physiognomy, and with subdued gestures.

It is the only means* afforded by the language of corporeal signs, to express to the eye and the mind an idea of the superior intelligence and power of beings who must be looked upon as above and beyond humanity. And the ancients have always so conceived and represented their divinities in action, whether alone or associated with mortals.

* i. e. as regards action, of which only we are here speaking.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHY THE EMPLOYMENT OF MODERN ALLEGORY HAS LESS FORCE
AND PRODUCES LESS EFFECT IN POETRY THAN IN PAINTING.

MORAL abstractions, the necessary results of the forms of speech, have become the source of the allegorical personifications, employed in the arts of design as signs of the general ideas required to be expressed.

We have shown that for the most part these signs must be nearly related to the creations of Paganism, which creations, although, owing to religious credence, they obtained formerly the force of corporeal existence, are nevertheless considered as a result of the same operation of the mind as in the formation of language.

Thus the modern allegorical figures, necessarily appealing to the eye under forms borrowed from mythological beings, have perpetuated in our arts a great number of images or signs, which have been changed only in name.

How is it that this has not also been the case

in modern languages and in their poetry? It is the property of poetry to animate all things, to give to every thing *a body, a mind, a soul, a countenance*; that is to say, to transform, to personify all things. Hence the infinite number of tropes, figures, metaphors, and allegorical emblems, which frequently are proper only to discourse, and lose their virtue when, as shown in Chapter ix, they are transferred to another sphere of imitation.

Modern poetry has not, like painting, been allowed to adopt and place among the number of its metaphorical means, certain mythological images which, from the frequent use made of them in language, are received as the synonymes of words or phrases serving to express moral notions or qualities. Thus Mars, Venus, Love, the Graces, &c., have become in the poetical vocabulary mere words, customary expressions; and, perhaps, there is no other restriction to their use than as regards religious subjects, and that for reasons of fitness as already given in the preceding Chapter.

Owing to this use of metaphors derived from Paganism, but now considered as mere synonymous terms, to which customarily the mind attaches no image, it has been inferred that the poet is justified in employing the marvellous of the ancient mythology as the principal machinery of the epic poem, and again to introduce the fabulous deities as the movers and instruments of

poetical action. But common sense was not slow in rejecting, more especially with regard to Christian subjects, the active intervention of these powers obliterated from general estimation by belief in Christianity. It became equally evident, that with the exception of some poetical trifles of no importance, or certain subjects that the imagination borrows from the history of Pagan times and people, the poet could not be permitted in subjects of a modern date to employ as supernatural agents, beings that have wholly fallen out of belief with those on whom it is proposed that they should be made to act; since their agency must be thought at least possible by those who are expected to be influenced by it.

The respect due to the mysteries and dogmas of Christianity, the very different nature of a religion that is in nowise addressed to the senses, the paucity of supernatural beings that it admits of personifying, and the danger of anthropomorphism, all contributed to render the employment of a marvellous drawn from Christian creeds still more difficult, unless by forming a poem, as Milton has done, the poetical marvellous, or the supernatural of which is, if one may so say, the sole subject, the subject itself, instead of being only an auxiliary resort.

Nevertheless, since all poetry exists by fiction, and since the poet, more especially in the creations of the epic muse, has need, according to

Boileau, *to press all things into the service in order to charm us*, he, therefore, looked about for some other means of subordinating the action and its springs, events and their course, to some cause at once supernatural and palpable ; such causes would, however, be equally incapable in poetry as in painting, of laying hold on the imagination without the aid of transformation and personification under corporeal forms.

The poet, therefore, called modern allegory to his aid ; believing that he could employ, with the same success as the painter and, like him, bring into play, Wisdom instead of Minerva, Justice instead of Themis, &c., and substitute Discord, the vices, and the virtues, for the mythological deities that personify them. He conceived that the names of the moral qualities, the physical phenomena, and the active principles of nature might supply the place of the beings that formerly represented them to the imagination.

Mere names took the place of bodies ; but names which, in language, call up no forms, are capable of giving rise to no images. Hence nothing for the imagination. Such allegorical beings have only a nominal or at most a phraseological existence. Their physiognomies being devoid of colour, and their forms of outline, elude the eyes of the mind ; these pretended creations far from diffusing life and stir through the poet's compositions, do but throw over them the cold-

ness of their own proper nature, still none other than metaphysical.

This last word affords a clue to the difference of effect produced by modern allegorical beings in poetry and in painting. The truth is, that language, while it suffices to give life and substance to abstract ideas, cannot also endue them with that active and motive virtue which would be requisite to their becoming, in poetry, a powerful spring of human affairs. An art, moreover, that is unfitted to render such beings visible, requires that some cause independent of it should excite a belief in them. Religion alone, by its forms of worship, its dogmas, its doctrines, its emblems, and its images, can occasion that general faith, by the aid of which the metaphysical conception acquires a consistency that allows of the imagination attributing to it a physical existence.

There is then this inconvenience attendant on the use, in modern poetry, of the personages of purely moral allegory — that, as regards the imagination, they do not exist. They are not the object of any positive or even fictitious belief. It is not merely that one does not know that they do exist, but that one knows they do not and cannot exist. In how small a degree, consequently, is it possible to make them play a part, or to attribute to them an action that the mind

can admit even as conventional, that is to say, as poetically verisimilar.

But, it is urged by some, the same criticism ought to apply in the arts of design, and the share the painter awards to them in human affairs when he makes them play a part therein, is equally inadmissible. True, we reply, it would be so were reason and mental judgment alone appealed to. But the painter has the advantage of being first of all judged by the eye ; and he has a means of raising a belief in the existence of the beings he creates, by exhibiting them invested with corporeal forms, each with its own characteristic figure set in motion and co-operating to an action. One sees Vengeance pursuing crime, Religion sustaining innocence. One sees Discord shaking her torch, Envy her snakes, Time flying rapidly away, Calumny distilling her poisons, Love sharpening, and taking aim with, his arrows, &c.

We may add further, that in the painter's composition, the allegorical person plays by no means so active, so extensive a part, or one which requires so much power as that imposed on it by the epic poet, who rests on it the chief conduct of the events of his poem. Its intervention in painting is limited, at one time, to a particular action, at another, to a co-operation that the mind of the spectator must look upon as understood. The moral allegory of the painter is fre-

quently, but a more or less conventional explanation of the subject with which it is associated ; and in many instances it only bears the import of an emblematic or symbolic sign, as will be seen in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE EFFECT OF SYMBOLICAL* COMPOSITION IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF SUBJECTS AND PERSONAGES.

THE method and the art of transforming real personages into metaphorical beings, in the style of composition that I have termed allegorical, the measure, the accordance, and the conditions of this kind of metamorphosis would undoubtedly, were one writing a treatise on the subject, require a much more extended and diversified consideration. But I have merely endeavoured to point out some of the sources, whence are derived the various means that the fine arts, each according to the properties inherent to its nature, have at command in order to attain the end of imitation, and also some of the mistakes that arise from a supposititious and imperfectly understood community of means.

* By symbolical composition we mean, not a mere combination of symbols, but one in which the symbolical attributes or emblems determine the system and signification.

The reader must not forget that our theory, being purely speculative, does not include among the means of the several arts, those which arise from skill in execution, and the gift of genius in the individual artist, which, indeed, may either modify the consequences of principles or soften down the defects resulting from a use of metaphor in itself erroneous. It is not a direct impossibility that the poet should be able to wield the moral allegory of the moderns so as to remedy its insignificancy. Neither can it be a matter of doubt, that the sense and potential effect of which this allegory is susceptible in painting, depends much on the greater or less ideality of character imparted to it by the artist in the execution which is dependent on himself.

I shall, therefore, have been imperfectly comprehended, if, in what I have said concerning the allegorical form of composition as applied by Rubens to his metaphorical history of Marie de Medicis, it has been supposed that, while I approved of it relatively to the general plan of conception, I also approved the taste of design and disposition, the style, character, and details of execution.

In nothing is discrimination on the part of the artist more requisite than in the use of an emblematic language, whose elements are often so variable, so arbitrary, and so liable to ambiguity. This inconvenience is still more perceptible when

(as is sometimes the case with Rubens) the artist is himself the inventor of allegories to which he for the first time attaches a signification not previously sanctioned by custom.

It is the same with symbols, which constitute a distinct branch of allegorical language.

Symbolical composition (which I have so termed because to the use of symbols is its metaphorical virtue more especially due) partakes still more of the nature and spirit of writing. Its personages, in the light in which they are employed, may be said to be, as it were, hieroglyphic characters, purporting to speak to the mind through abbreviated signs of the images of objects.

To sculpture, whether considered at large in statues or the ornaments of architecture, or in its minor department of medals or coins, more especially belongs both the use of symbols, and of symbolical writing. Although it may be, and in fact is, made use of in painting, yet there is one remark to be made respecting the taste and fitness of the use so made of it, that must not be passed over.

It is this. Symbols in relation to the figures with which they are associated can only be looked upon as emblematic signs ; I mean as representing things whose image is purely intellectual. Since, therefore, they must not wear an appearance too closely approaching to real existence, their employment is much more in accordance

with the arts which, owing to the nature of their materials, are debarred the resources of colour, the effect of which is to give objects the semblance of life and reality.

For instance, Nicholas Poussin, in one of his pictures representing Moses saved from the waters, has been pleased to invest with the colours of life, the female head of the Sphinx, a symbol against which, as in the ancient statue, is resting the allegorical figure of the Nile personified. This surely must be considered an error. The Sphinx with the body of a lion and the head of a woman was of old time only one of the emblematical signs of hieroglyphic writing; and this, being to us wholly chimerical, was not deemed real even by the ancient Egyptians. Since its existence was at no time considered as even poetically probable, is it fitting that the pencil should give to a factitious symbol, a most palpable appearance of animated existence? Whatever be the opinion adopted in this respect, it is evident that what in painting is a difficulty, becomes an advantage to sculpture, in as much as were the Sphinx wholly of marble it could not produce the same incoherence of ideas, nor so heterogeneous a mingling of inert matter with living beings.

The motive for employing symbols in sculpture, and the engraving of medals, is sufficient to determine their significative import, and by this should the artist be guided in his manner of using, and

the spectator in the light in which he considers them. As signs of ideas, as conventional complements of the forms of objects, and as a portion or mere abridgment of their images, they are frequently found together in compositions, from no other reason than that for which written characters are combined. Their co-existence is purely intellectual, and their connexion merely conventional.

Hence, the want of correlative proportion, urged as an objection by certain critics against objects so employed. But the least consideration might suffice to convince them that such disproportions belong to the very nature of a form of composition which does not admit the figures of bodies for their own sake; but only for that of the idea they serve to convey. It is clear that no proportional ratio is possible between signs which embrace the forms of all existent things and beings, from that of the gnat to that of the terrestrial globe.

The symbol being a conventional sign, it is not necessary that it should always wear an appearance such as would constitute it the actual imitation of reality, nay, rather it would frequently contradict itself were too close a resemblance aspired to. Associated with allegorical figures, the signification of which it enforces and explains, it also becomes necessary that those figures should be of an abstract or generalized character, that is,

as already defined, the opposite of that particularized imitation, the object of which is to excite a belief in the reality of the individual. Now this applies alike to all figures, whether they are of themselves allegorical or approach the ideal by being associated with allegorical personages. We have already pointed out the importance of this necessary harmony.

It equally holds good with regard to personages, whatever they may be, that are endued with the same metaphorical property by applying to them symbolical attributes. For we know that the symbols which characterize the moral qualities, and the abstract ideas of personages themselves abstract, such as the scales in the hand of justice, the rudder, the club, and the sword, indicative of civil administration, of strength, and of power, are equally applicable, metaphorically, to the representations of celebrated men and living individuals. Thus the thunderbolt was formerly placed in the hand of Pericles to express the wonderful power of his eloquence. Thus too the images of men renowned for their knowledge or their abilities are continually accompanied by well known symbols appertaining to the arts and sciences.

The physical and moral effect that results from thus accompanying real or historical personages with symbolical attributes is evidently to give them a metaphorical signification. I say *evidently*,

and the word must be here taken in its strictest meaning. For since the effect of the symbol is intellectual, where this takes place, the mind's sight must not be contravened by that of the body, which is as much as to say, that the intent of the metaphor must first of all strike the eye. But the symbolical metaphor cannot be visible unless the figure that is accompanied by the metaphorical attribute clearly interprets its idea,—unless it is visibly in accordance with it.

Now to render this accordance perceptible, the taste, style, and character of the two objects must correspond. Here all is correlative. The symbolical sign exerts a moral action on the figure it is to illustrate, and the figure a like re-action on the signification of the symbol with which it is placed in relation. I may add, that the intent of the symbol, so frequently liable to a twofold interpretation, is much more readily determined by the figure, than is the subject either of the figure or of the composition in which it forms a part, by the symbolical sign, which is, from its very nature, equivocal. Hence, we must conclude that the ideal style impressed, for instance, on a statue is to be regarded much more as a medium through which to metaphorize the symbolical sign than the symbol to allegorize the statue.

When, therefore, a figure which is accompanied by symbolical attributes is neither conceived nor treated in the ideal style, tending to change its

costume and ordinary appearance, the attribute resuming the simple meaning attached to its natural form, loses the power of signifying what was intended by its use and presence. I will give, as an instance, a sculptor who once made a statue of Moliere. Desirous of designating the poet's art, and looking on that art, according to the metaphor employed in language, as the mirror of civil life, he represented his personage, habited with strict adherence to the modern costume of the day, as holding a mirror, also of a modern fashion. The figure afforded no other idea than that of a dealer in looking glasses, and was so nick-named.

The same would be the case with every figure or composition, in the low style of imitation, accompanied by symbolical attributes borrowed from the ordinary things of life; as the scales, the crook, the curb, the wheel, the rudder, and many others which are not susceptible of a moral acceptance, unless with the concurrent aid of the ideal style in the representations of the persons they accompany.

It is scarcely, I think, necessary to remark that the same will hold good with regard to the significance of symbolical animals, when associated with figures or compositions of persons, whose moral qualities it is intended to designate by the relation existing between those qualities and the instinctive properties of different animals. It is also re-

quisite that the form of the personages should be so rendered metaphorical as to intimate to the spectator that the animals are used only in the sense of symbolical metaphor. Now, their moral signification, that is, the acceptance in which they are to be understood, depends solely in such cases on the visible accordance of style and character existing between the accessory and the principal personage in the composition. It is the character of the latter that determines the sense of the former. By such means alone is our imagination led to conceive that, for instance, a young girl with a sheep signifies gentleness or innocence, that a female with a pair of scales is indicative of justice, or equality, which is never other than justice.

What would be required in imitating their corporeal forms, in order that these two figures to which the above attributes are assigned, instead of representing innocence and justice, should be nothing more than a shepherdess and a shop-woman? Merely to give them an every-day form and a costume not ideal.

So great is the difference between the positive and the ideal, that according as the style, character, and costume of the figures proposed to be rendered allegorical, belongs to the one or the other, the idea formed of them rises or falls, the one exalts their significance to the moral region of intellectual beings, the other depresses it to a level with

the commonest things. And this effect takes place almost mechanically ; it arises from the mere instinct of the spectator, from that sympathy through which a necessary co-relation is maintained between visible objects and purely intellectual things.

As the appearance and the external form of the figure that is accompanied by a symbol, ratifies or contradicts its intent, strengthens or neutralizes the effect of the sign, in itself arbitrary, and as we have seen that there is a reciprocal action between them, if not as regards the eye, at least as regards the mind, so it is necessary further to remark that this reciprocity must have place only after the manner already indicated with respect to personified allegory. That is to say, the symbol must receive its intellectual import from the ideal style of the figure it accompanies, but cannot communicate it to one deficient in that style ; and when the low style of the figure reduces the idea of the symbol to its simple meaning, the idea of the symbol cannot raise the aspect of that figure to a metaphorical sense. Whence it follows, that not only will the intervention of the symbolical sign be ill-timed, but will not be supposed to have occurred when a composition is treated in the positive and low style of imitation.

The symbolical form of composition considered as a means of expressing moral or abstract ideas

and transforming subjects and personages, coincides, as already seen, to a certain degree with the system of emblematical writing. In this view, the use of symbols and the system of composition derived from it are not equally available in every subject, nor to all the arts. Designed as a substitute for the natural expression of ideas and objects in arts and subjects which have at command but few means of explanation, the symbol, which frequently conveys to the eye a twofold meaning, would but furnish obscure enigmas in those arts which, having the aid of language, can render every idea clear, palpable, and significant.

CHAPTER XV.

EXPLAINS WHY SYMBOLICAL METAPHOR IS IN POETRY OF BUT
LITTLE WORTH.

OF all the arts, that of sculpture is the one possessing the least extensive means as concerns the representation of actions, the least various in that of personages. Devoid of the resources of colours and their effects, and limited to a very small number of figures in statuary, and of aspects in basso-relievo, this art would express fewer things than any other, did it not compensate by the intrinsic worth of its images for what they want in diversity, and attain in them by a collective and condensed significance what they cannot acquire in number, extent, and narrative qualities. Hence therefore, this art endeavours to collect together under a small number of signs, a very large mass of ideas, and to produce the most forcible impression by the fewest means. As it is the ideal or generalized style of design which furnishes the highest idea of individuals, and as this style does not acquire its fullest value, but in the expression of the beauty of bodies, so it is more necessary in sculpture than in painting to

represent nudity, — that poetical and really metaphorical nudity, (see it treated of in the succeeding chapters,) by the aid of which, as well as by some other means, the ordinary is exchanged for the ideal appearance of things.

The secret of this art consists in expressing so much the more, the less it speaks ; and the same is the case with allegory, which, as we have seen, betokens more things than it exhibits : it is so, in short, with all metaphor and all fiction, which carry the mind far beyond the object immediately before the eye.

It does not altogether arise from the artist's will, but very frequently from necessity that he uses these resources in the art of sculpture, both in its greater and lesser department. By its lesser department, I mean, for instance, medal engraving. In it all the imitative means of art are circumscribed within the narrowest compass, and reduced to very small dimensions ; while, contrarywise, the subjects to be represented are among the most considerable, and the most abounding in circumstances. It is therefore frequently requisite to conceive and express those subjects with the fewest possible figures.

But in corporeal imitation it belongs only to metaphorical conceptions to express many ideas under a few figures ; and as it would seem that the symbolical conception is more than any other of these fitted to reduce the most extended moral

or intellectual idea to the *minimum* of image, symbols are therefore the proper characters in the figurative writing of medals.

But the more necessary symbolical language may, in many cases, be to an art which, devoid of many other means of expression, can frequently express itself only by signs, the less must be its utility to an art which possesses within itself every possible resource for speaking to the mind, which is capable of expressing all moral and intellectual ideas, and whose very property it is that it can address nothing to the visual organ, can render nothing intelligible, when material objects are concerned, but by the aid of mental images. And that art is poetry.

We may also remark that the ancient poets, while they personified at pleasure whatever they desired to render sensible, and frequently resorted to allegorical personification, have yet very rarely introduced symbolical descriptions in their images. Besides that descriptions by means of attributes and emblems are in themselves frigid, and can give no animation to the theme, they are open to another objection, that of being obscure and enigmatical.

True it is that in poetry certain traits borrowed from the images and properties of bodies may make a significant, expressive, and congenial picture to the mind, which, nevertheless, the painter's art cannot reproduce without destroying their

moral force, precisely because it would give them the force of reality ; so that what would be noble in the ideal painting of the poet, would become ridiculous in the corporeal poetry of the painter.

When, for instance, Horace represents tardy punishment pursuing crime, as lame-footed, this allegory has the advantage of being expressive without its image proving offensive to us through a natural deformity which, to the eye alone, would be highly so. Some artist may perhaps one of these days take it into his head to translate the poet's allegory into a visible image ; I leave the reader to imagine the impression that would be produced on seeing the figure of Punishment, stumping along after the criminal, with a wooden leg.

But has not Horace, in his turn, made the same mistake, bordering closely on the ridiculous, when, in his ode to Fortune, he seems to have been desirous of forming, as though intended for the eye, a symbolical composition of the personages attendant on the fickle goddess ? If any thing can prove how ambiguous are symbolical attributes in description, it is that figure of Necessity carrying in her brazen hand, nails and wedges, without forgetting cramps and melted lead.*

* Te semper anteit scœva necessitas,
Clavos trabales et cuneos manu
Gestans ahenâ ; nec severus
Uncus abest, liquidúmque plumbum.

This description has exercised the criticism of various commentators, who are divided in opinion, not as to the sense of the words, but the use of the things they express.

Some have maintained that the poet borrowed his symbolical composition from a picture of Fortune in the temple at Antium. Hypothesis on hypothesis, I should rather suppose that his figure of Necessity was derived from some statue, and probably a brazen one, as the words *manu gestans ahendâ* would indicate.

It is the part of necessity to give fixedness to things, to subdue elements, however combined, by constraining them to yield to the law of force. One would expect that in order to express this abstract idea to the eye the artist would seek some images derived from perceptible and well known objects; such as nails serving to give stability to carpentry work, wedges to rend violently asunder or to force things to adhere closely together, and cramps fastened with molten lead to secure their juncture. How else than by means of this kind could the statuary unfold the meaning or subject of his figure?

But the poet who, in fewer words even than are required to enumerate the symbols of the sculptor, might unfold to us, in its fullest extent, the power of necessity both as to its action on human affairs and its effects on their final consequences, which again might induce grave reflections and most

important ideas, what, I say, does he, in endeavouring to represent it by means of material attributes, but convert his art into an ambiguous interpreter of another art? He exchanges the force of ideas for that of words. He neglects the moral impression of the thing, to grasp its sign only, and depicts not Necessity, but merely its statue.

The Goddess Fortune had also, as every one must know, her symbolical attributes, and Horace might in like manner have described her ball, her wheel, and her rudder. But is he not far more truly a poet when, in four lines, he gives us an idea of that power which could snatch the sons of mortality from the most degraded condition and convert the proudest triumphs into funereal mourning? * Here we have a specimen of the true paintings of poetry. These are the imagerial associations which it is privileged to make, the secret of which cannot be stolen from it by the other arts. Wherefore then should poetry seek to borrow means of expression which to them are only supplementary, or but feeble substitutes for a property which nature has denied them? It were truly a ridiculous error! It would be to prefer hieroglyphics to writing; to substitute the

* O Diva, grata quæ regis Antium,
Presens, vel imo tollere de gradu
Mortale corpus, vel superbos
Vertere funeribus triumphos :

